

# JACONETTA

## HER LOVES

M · E · M · DAVIS



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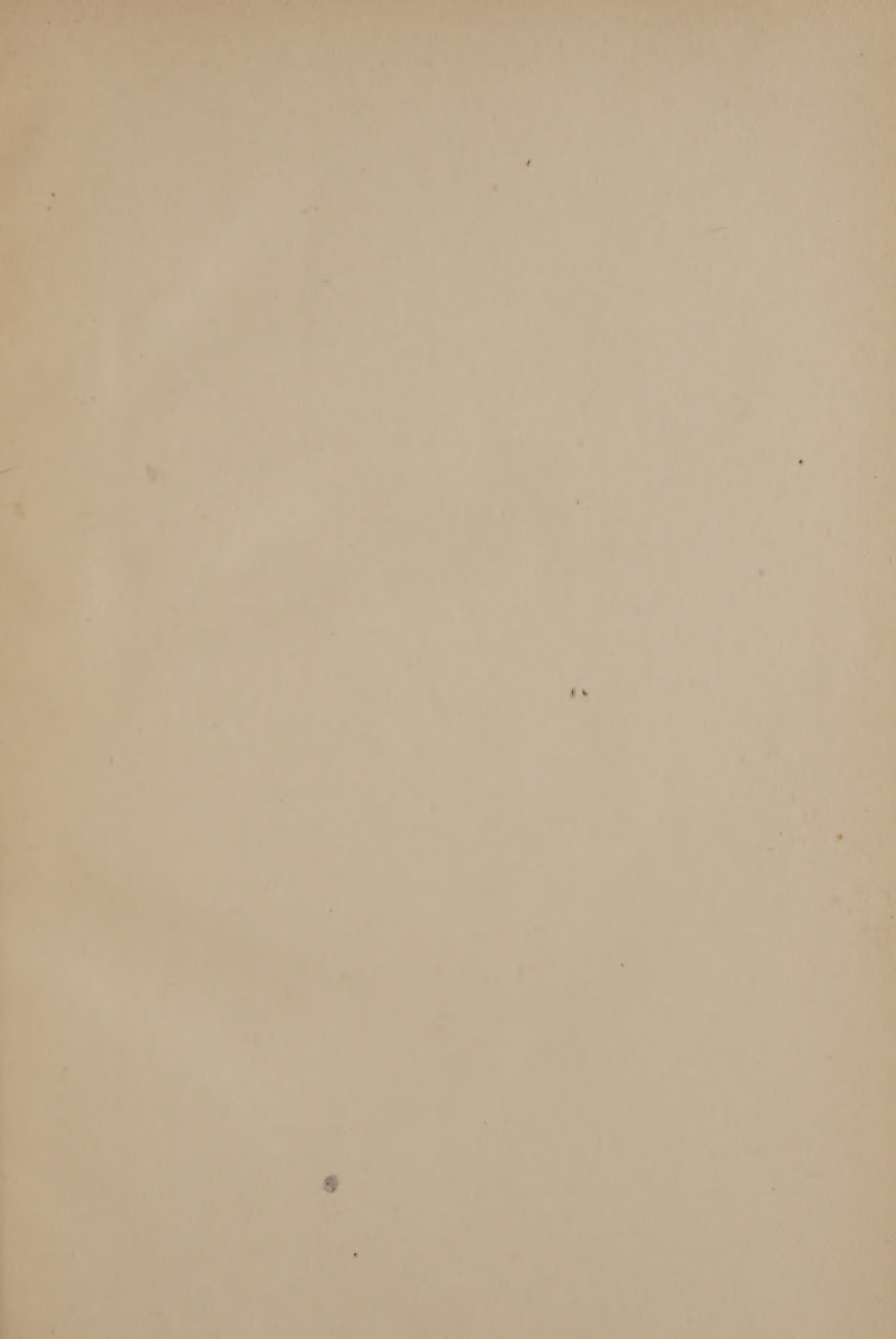
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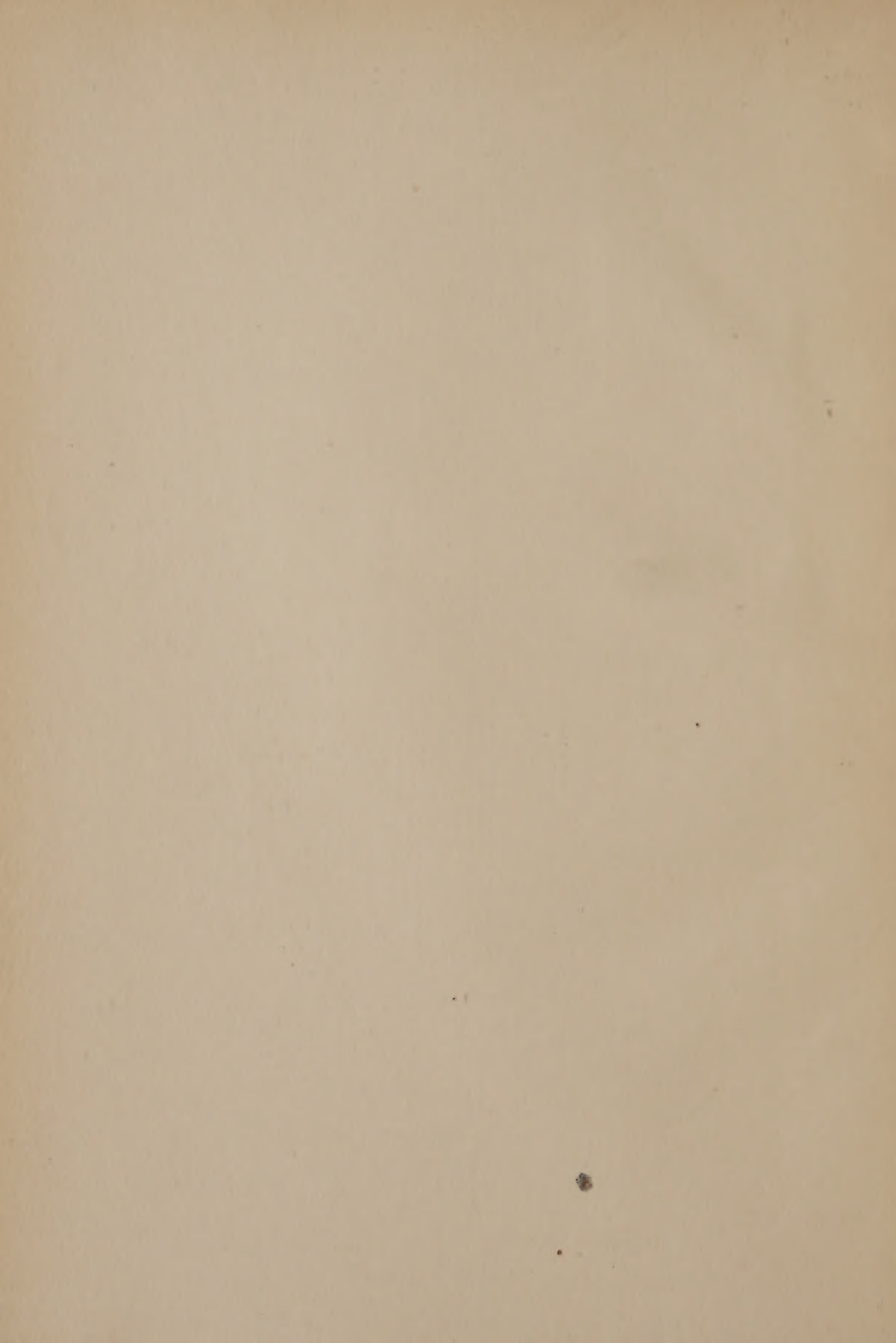
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Mrs. M. E. M. Davis.

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I CRIED MYSELF TO SLEEP

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BY

M. E. M. DAVIS

AUTHOR OF "UNDER THE MAN FIG," "THE WIRE  
CUTTERS," "THE QUEEN'S GARDEN," ETC.



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
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*Drawn by Ethel Franklin Betts.*





## JACONETTA: HER LOVES

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### I

#### GOOD CHEER PLANTATION

I KNEW myself as Jaconetta. Those around me addressed me by the more homely name bestowed upon me—I was about to say in baptism. But now I bethink me, I was not christened in infancy, that seal of regeneration for some unknown reason being denied me, though freely imprinted upon the foreheads of my three older and my two younger brothers. I suffered much in secret during the earlier years of my life, both from the shame of this exclusion and from the hideous knowledge that because of it a fiery torment awaited me somewhere underground, “soon ’s ever the breath lef” my body. This impression I had received

from certain discussions carried on from day to day at dinner-table between two gentlemen, — guests at Good Cheer. One of these, red-faced, rotund, and choleric, declared that there were unbaptized infants a span long burning in hell-fire; his opponent, tall and thin and seemingly a tenderer soul, protested meekly, but retired, daily, crushed (I thought), from the contest. Perhaps he simply shut dignified lips and withered the Calvinist with a pitying look. But to my terrified soul triumph remained with the latter; and I continued to quake at the thought of death and the scorching furnace to which I was destined. I sometimes wonder now why I did not confide this trouble to my mother, or to my father, the sweetest soul alive! Why indeed I did not boldly demand justice at the hands of the portly old bishop who was a frequent visitor at Good Cheer, and who from time to time in our library set the signet of redemption on the brow of a baby brother. But childhood is singularly reticent, though that is not its reputation. Only a poet has sufficient insight to recognize that the thoughts

of youth are "long, long thoughts," which rarely find expression in words.

*Jaconetta : Her Loves.* This fanciful and truly romantic name, by the way, was my own invention; or I might rather call it an adaptation, from *jaconet*, a pretty cotton stuff, now almost obsolete, of which my summer frocks were made. As *Jaconetta* I wandered through that dream world into which, one after another, entered those loves of whom I am about to tell, and out of which, one after another, they ignominiously departed. For, in lieu of *Jaconetta's Loves* might be written *Jaconetta's Disillusions, Disappointments, Miseries, Heart-breaks*. In this, however, *Jaconetta* in her dream world does not stand alone.

My first love was a Blacksmith.

Our house, big and roomy, with peaked roof, dormer windows, great outside red-brick chimneys, and wide encircling galleries, stood in the midst of park-like grounds, within easy reach of a little country town. There was a profusion of *Lamarque* and cloth-of-gold roses about the galleries; a tangle of honeysuckle envel-

oped the chimneys and clung to the downward-sloping roof. A rose-garden lapped in sunshine stretched away from the steps of the south porch; the north colonnade overlooked the orange grove, beyond which grew an orchard of stunted peach-trees, utterly worthless as to fruit, but a pink glory in the early spring. Behind the house there was a large kitchen garden whose beds of sturdy vegetables were bordered with clove-pinks, ragged-robin, violets, jonquils, rosemary, rue, and sage. My own little garden hedged with Star-of-Bethlehem was in a corner, — a rectangular space duly laid off and regularly planted with flower and vegetable seed, but always strewn, as I remember it, with bits of broken china, odds and ends of doll-rags, fragments of playthings, — mute witnesses of the housekeeping set up by Jaco-  
netta, now in one nook of the place, now in another. “Da’ chile,” Uncle Jake, the gardener, was wont to remark in season and out of season, leaning upon his spade and regarding my trampled garden-squares, “Da’ chile ain’t got no gyarden sense. She keerless. She



tromplin'. She ain't got no good han'. Look at her maw. Look at Mis' Sybil,—Mis' Sybil *she* got a good han'. Ef she poke a daid oak limb in de groun' hit 's boun' fer to grow! But da' chile ain't like her maw. M-m-m-m. No, she ain't like her maw." Which was true. My mother was a tall, delicate young creature (though then I thought her the oldest person in the world), with soft hazel eyes, soft dark hair drawn away from a low white brow, a slow sweet smile, a gentle voice, and a will of iron which later, when the Civil War had swept my father and brothers to the front, when the overseer had shouldered his rifle and the plantation fell to her sole management, stood her in good stead. I remember her in these earlier days, a flapping straw hat on her pretty head, a pair of heavy chamois gloves covering her hands, going about the rose-garden ministering to opening bud or falling flower; or stooping to the moist brown earth, transplanting violets. Roses and violets! She was always at one or the other,—when she was not down at the Quarters nursing sick

babies, or brewing tisanes for superannuated "hands." No, Jaconetta, you were not like your mother. Poor Jaconetta!

Beyond the negro quarters, the plantation fields spread away—an endless billowy sea of cane. Here I often went with my father when he made his daily rounds to consult with his overseer, and to overlook with his own eyes the progress of his precious crops. I sat beside him in his light buggy, or perched behind him on his big easy-going horse, Marcus. The field-hands, I was not slow to perceive, had a much higher opinion of my small self than Uncle Jake, the gardener, or than Aun' Calline, the high-turbaned cook whose kitchen I cluttered with my battered household gods. "Li'l Missy has fotch us good luck, Mars John," Big Aaron would say, touching his hat to my father. "Ef we needs rain, rain it come when li'l Missy shine her eye on de cane-row. Ef we prayin' for clear skies, de sun come out when li'l Missy cross de road." Whereupon Jaconetta would forget Uncle Jake's revilings and Aun' Calline's evil en-

treatments and behold herself a beneficent fairy dispensing good at will.

The large yard in front of the house — my Sybil calls it a lawn — was dotted with clumps of syringa, piettisporum, and camelias alternating with open grassy spaces, heavenly green under the sunny sky. A summer-house, jessamine draped, stood a little to one side of the front gate; the carriage gate below was overarched with honeysuckle. The brown dusty road outside led off in one direction toward a bit of wood which flanked the home-fields; it was crossed just this side of the wood by a brawling spring-branch, clear and shallow, though it fell here and there into deep still blue-green pools where “pyearch” were reputed to bide. Toward the town, the road, turning squarely around our peach-orchard fence, halted beside Jesse Marbury’s blacksmith’s shop.

The smithy was low and smoke-grimed within and without; it had a leaning chimney and a squat door which was all awry. But a thriving business was done at Marbury’s.

Morning, noon, and night the bellows blew out sparks from a bed of glowing coal; the alternate hammers of Marbury and his sooty assistant rang incessantly on the anvil, while horses champing impatiently at the hitching-posts awaited their shoes; wagons propped forlornly on crotched sticks awaited the tires lying, ringed with fire, on the ground hard by; sleek negro lads lounging around the door awaited the bolt, bar, or chain which was a-mending.

To save my life I cannot tell whether the blacksmith was young or old. I do not remember that the age or personal appearance of the recipients cut any figure, to use a slang expression, in the bestowal of Jaconetta's affections. Indeed, there never seems to have been any special reason why her heart should have taken fire from any of its objects. Ordinarily there is something like the ghost of a wherefore in such matters. Arthur has a curling mustache, or fine blue eyes, or a pot of money, or a swaggering walk, or a good tailor — for any one of which virtues Clem-

entina is justified in adoring Arthur. Clementina has a dimple in her left cheek, or a jimp waist, or a lisp, or a pursy father ; naturally Arthur falls at Clementina's feet. Jaconetta could not have given a single reason why the sight of such or such an individual should have caused cold thrills to run up and down her backbone, or made her poor little heart thump underneath her apron. Even now I cannot account for her choice — or I should say her choices, for she had, successively, many. But the blacksmith, as I have said, enjoys the distinction of having been the first.

I was, I think, about six years old when the anvil of my heart responded to the spiritual hammer wielded by the esteemed Mr. Marbury.

Jesse Marbury, whether young or middle-aged, had a brawny arm, a loud voice, and a red face often streaked with smut. I used to glance at him askance as we drove by the smithy, all a-tremble lest my mother, or, too horrible to contemplate ! my brothers, crowded

on the opposite seat of the carriage, should suspect my feelings. The sight of Mr. Marbury dancing about the anvil, hammer in hand, or fitting a shoe to the horse's foot gripped between his knees, filled me with rapture unutterable. Sometimes, attended by Mandy, my own small coal-black maid, I stole down the road, and creeping stealthily in and out among the champing horses and the dismembered wagons, I peeped in at the squat door, and sped away terror-stricken at my own audacity. Once Mr. Marbury, coming out unexpectedly, nearly stumbled over me; and, recovering himself, did me the honor to ask my name. I all but gasped out *Jaconetta*, but bethought me in time and left it to Mandy to utter the humble unchristen name by which I am known. I walked away treading on air. "Dat's a low-down po'-white trash-man," remarked Mandy contemptuously, looking back over her shoulder at the blacksmith. Whereupon I haled her into a convenient fence-corner and so chastised her that she wept and recanted.



## II

### THE RED SUGAR LION

ONE morning — it was about four days after Christmas, and there was a vanishing smell of cake, oranges, mince-pie, and the like throughout the house — I took my red lion from the mantelpiece in mother's room (balanced precariously on the arm of father's chair to do so) and sauntered out into the rose-garden. I had been expressly forbidden to touch the red sugar lion without permission; and I felt guilty but blissful as I descended the steps of the south porch and strolled along the violet-bordered walk. I had no presentiment of impending evil. I had not then observed, as I was afterward compelled to do, that my love disillusions, disappointments, miseries, heartbreaks, were invariably preceded by some misdemeanor, meanness, or

crime on my own part, though there was never any apparent connection between the two. My Nemesis was not logical.

I held the red sugar lion hugged to my breast. He was very handsome; a Niagara of candy curls fell about his shoulders; a sugary tail, spiked at the end, turned over his back; two tiny black beads served him for eyes. He smiled ferociously within his saccharine whiskers. I had found him Christmas morning guarding the entrance to my stocking. My brother Tom had got a mottled leopard, also of sugar, which he had bolted on the spot; a green monkey and a parti-colored eagle had in like manner gone the way of Hart's and Charley's throats; the twins, following their example, had devoured a purple sugar kitten apiece.

I only — I strutted superbly along, remembering — I only had refrained. Twenty times a day since had I drawn attention to this fact, humbling the transgressors by pointing proudly to my lion, intact, and seated in curly and solitary majesty on mother's mantel.

Alas, Jaconetta, the Wise Man himself hath said it! Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

The boys were playing *It* in the rose-garden — though the rose-garden was forbidden playground. “Hi! Yi! Sis! You ’re It!” yelled my brother Tom, touching me with a grimy forefinger, then leaping upward and alighting on his toes poised for flight, while the others hovered around. “You ’re It!”

“I ’m not,” I yelled back. “I can’t play,” I added with dignity. “I ’m taking my red sugar lion for a walk.”

A second later and the whole gang, including a rag, tag, and bobtail of pickaninnies from the Quarters, was upon me. “Dullaw!” snorted Mandy, who accompanied me, “look at dem niggerses greedy eyes! Dey wide open an’ yawnin’ a’ter dat candy lyun!”

So indeed were Hart’s eyes and Charley’s and the twins’. But my brother Tom’s soft gray orbs were half closed. He surveyed me through their long lashes for a moment, then

he observed carelessly, "I've got a trap set out in the colt-paster. I'm goin' right now to look at it. I reckon there's more'n a hundred pattridges in it by this time."

*Myself*: Oh, Tom, take me with you! Please, *please*, Tom.

*Tom*: M-m-m-m. I dunno. Girls is so squeaky.

*Myself*: I ain't squeaky, you know I ain't. Oh, Tom, please!

*Tom*, relenting: I d' know. Maybe —

*Myself*, rapturous: Oh, Tom!

*Tom*, indifferently: Goin' to take your candy lion?

*Myself*: Oh, no! He might get *hurt*. Wait for me. I'll run an' put him back (setting out breathlessly).

*Tom*, running after me: Lemme taste him, Sis. Jest one lick, — jest one!

*Myself*: Oh-h-h, *no*!

*Tom*: All right, Missy. Then you shan't go to the pattridge trap.

*Myself*, dubiously: M-m-m-m. Jest one? Oh, Tom, you *won't* hurt him?

*Tom*, devoutly : Cross-my-heart. Wishermay-die.

Upon this solemn asseveration I held out my red candy lion. *Tom*'s redder tongue leaped out and whipped joyously around the bristling whiskers ; *Tom*'s jaws opened, and snap ! his white teeth crunched into the curly mane, his jaws closed ; and only that part of the headless body which supported the hind legs and upheld the brave spiky tail remained in my paralyzed hand.

I shrieked wildly, gazing in impotent rage after the flying traitor, who darted down a garden path, leaped a hedge, and disappeared from sight.

"Ef you 'd 'a' minded yo' maw"— began Mandy severely.

But I slapped Mandy into silence and resumed my ear-splitting shrieks.

"What is the matter ?" demanded the One-Wheel Sulky Man, coming out of his workshop.

### III

#### THE ONE-WHEEL SULKY MAN

THE One-Wheel Sulky Man had arrived unheralded at Good Cheer one spring morning. He was a stranger. I do not know whence he came or what had been his antecedents. It is doubtful if even my father, who discovered him sitting in deep meditation on a bench in the old summer-house, ever knew. It was the rule in those dear old big-hearted hospitable days, that no questions should be asked a guest; and that a guest who bore upon him the hall-mark of gentility was welcome as long as he chose to stay in the ever-open plantation-house. The latter clause was sometimes interpreted with great liberality. Our old tutor, Doctor Erasmus Whitthorne, for example, a faraway kinsman, purseless, homeless, but as rare in sweetness of temper and



absent-mindedness as he was in knowledge of Latin, Greek, and classic poetry, came to Good Cheer on a fortnight's visit to his more prosperous relatives. He remained, honored and beloved, above twoscore years,—in other words, until the day of his death.

The stranger in the summer-house had no luggage to speak of. A much-worn portmanteau rested on the bench beside him; a long Spanish cloak of black broadcloth lined with scarlet lay across his knees. He held in one hand a small oblong leather case which proved to contain a little black ebony piccolo with silver mountings, upon which he could play with surprising skill and sweetness. Often and often during the soft moonlighted nights of that spring and summer did I awake at night to hear the fine penetrating notes stealing forth from the office window upon the night air. Often of a summer afternoon did the One-Wheel Sulky Man emerge from his workshop, look this way and that with a dreamy yearning in his blue eyes, then, putting his piccolo to his lips, walk off, fol-

lowed, a veritable Pied Piper, by every child on the place, black and white, to the bit of wood beyond the spring-branch; where, seated on the root of a tree with his back to the trunk, he remained the livelong afternoon playing tunes I have never heard any other mortal play, strange, melancholy, wistful tunes that made us weep, we knew not why.

Spread out on the newcomer's knee were some loose sheets of writing paper. My father could see at a glance that these sheets were covered with diagrams all interlaced with written characters, fine, delicate, and regular as copper-plate. The soft blue eyes, if they had been dropped upon the diagrams, had wandered away and were now fixed with an abstracted gaze upon the pink glory of our peach-orchard, far off, but visible through the lattice-work of the summer-house. "Beautiful exceedingly," he murmured, quite to himself. "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed" —

"Like one of these!" cried my father, delighted, stepping into the summer-house. The spring blossoming of that otherwise useless



STRANGE, MELANCHOLY, WISTFUL TUNES



peach-orchard he was wont to declare worth yearly its weight in gold! Mr. Jesse Marbury, I later learned, was wont for his part to declare that if that peach-orchard was his, by jing! he would set fire to the trees, blooms, wasp-nests, bird's-nests, butterflies, and all, and plant somp'n that would sell!

The stranger and my father walked across the yard to the house arm in arm that spring morning, black Dandy following with the port-manteau, which he eyed disrespectfully as he went. That day, and the next and the next, and for many successive days, — in fact, at least one other spring had come and gone since my father found him in the summer-house, — he sat at our table, at my mother's right hand, his quiet eyes fixed on her face, or following the gyrations of the honey-bees about the cinnamon roses just outside the opposite window, totally unmoved by the constantly raging storm of argument between Doctor Erasmus Whitthorne and Mr. Shackelford, the Calvinist aforesaid (another yearly-lingering guest), concerning the future state of the soul. Quarters

were assigned him in the office or garçonière, a detached building designed partly for the private business office of the master of the plantation, and partly for the accommodation of such bachelors as might be tarrying at Good Cheer. A half-grown negro lad was appointed his body-servant; and finally the roomy tool-house off the rose-garden was cleared out, fitted up with work-bench, bellows, and anvil, and turned over, with doors chained and padlocked, to his sole use.

It was not long before the plantation, and doubtless the town and neighborhood, were rife with stories of mysterious doings in the tool-house. Regularly, every morning after breakfast, our new guest shut himself therein, and presently smoke would pour from the improvised chimney, and a steady *clink-clank* sounded on the anvil, followed by certain filings, sawings, and hammerings which well-nigh drove the curious to distraction. It began indeed to be whispered about that the hammerer was in league with the Devil, and that the broad sheet of paper which he pored over



during those rare moments when he opened the tool-house door for air or light, was his (signed) compact with that sooty gentleman.

The atmosphere grew heavy with fantastic rumors. All this I learned long afterward. At the time, I only knew that my father thought it proper to allay excitement by disclosing a secret. Our guest was an inventor; he had already dreamed wonderful things, — air-ships, hanging beds fitting snugly to the ceiling by day and at night descending noiselessly to the floor, unearthly musical instruments, automatic coffee-pots; he was at present engaged in constructing a sulky which should have but one wheel. It would take the place, for swiftness, cheapness, and durability, of any known vehicle; it would astonish the world; it would inaugurate a new era in the sphere of travel. Misgivings were at once relieved by this revelation, though wonder and interest grew. Naturally there was much skepticism as to the ultimate value of the invention; a few people, among these Doctor Erasmus Whitthorne, gave in their adherence at

once and unequivocally to the theory expounded in a musical and melancholy voice by the inventor. The majority, headed by Mr. Shackelford, were loud in their scorn. I think my father belonged to the skeptics, but he courteously refrained from expressing his opinion, standing between the blue-eyed dreamer and his jeering challengers with an air of dignity which in his presence forbade criticism. I have heard him say in after days that the One-Wheel Sulky Man was at once the simplest and the sweetest soul he ever knew.

The filing, sawing, and hammering went on. A wheel from an old buggy in the coach-house was rolled into the workshop, and a pair of shafts were added to the accumulating paraphernalia in front of the door. I now think there must have been from time to time abortive trials — at midnight, perhaps — of the great invention; for I remember dimly-heard noises about the rose-garden, which invaded my dreams, followed by intervals of lassitude and idleness on the part of the inventor, — times when the hammerings ceased altogether,

and the wailing tones of the piccolo resounded for hours at a time, by night from the office, by day from the summer-house or the bit of forest. At such times I regarded the player with profound interest. He had a tall, slightly stooping figure, with very long arms, and white hands, slender and delicate-looking as a woman's. His long, curling hair was of a pale golden color, his far-away eyes were very blue and steady. He was, judging from an old daguerreotype in my possession (taken during his sojourn at Good Cheer) about thirty years old and extremely handsome. With all his gentleness he commanded respect. My brothers were, to tell the truth, afraid of him. I am sure I do not know why he, instead of the Blacksmith, was not Jaconetta's First Love.

## IV

### THE DOWNFALL OF THE BLACKSMITH

“What is the matter?” repeated the One-Wheel Sulky Man, lifting me in his arms as easily as if I had been a bit of thistledown. My astonishment was so great that I instantly ceased to bellow. For, although he must now have been an inmate of our house for nearly two years, he had never offered to take me on his knee, or acknowledged my existence except by an occasional light touch of his hand on my head, when I stood beside him listening to his piccolo. Looking at him, I realized, child though I was, that something unusual must have happened to him. There were red spots on his usually pale cheeks, his eyes were alert and shining, he smiled with an air of triumph. He walked rapidly, holding me on his arm, over to the porch where my mother now stood, and set me at her feet.

“Congratulate me, my lady,” he cried in a gay, boyish voice; “mine hour has come.”

My mother looked at him with soft, compassionate eyes, and held out her hand in silence. He bent over it gallantly, and kissed it with courtly grace; then he hurried back to the tool-house.

The door of the tool-house was open. My father, standing near, was giving curt orders to Jerry, our coachman, and two of the stable boys within. These presently appeared, rolling out between them the much-heralded one-wheel sulky.

It would be beyond my powers to describe the invention. Like the wheels in Ezekiel’s vision, it was so high that it was dreadful. The other day I chanced to see a reckless boy mounted on an old high-wheel bicycle. I had on the instant a swift conceit of the curious spidery circle within its glistening tire, and the high-swung, awkward seat balanced somehow above it, with the ridiculous little shafts far below, which I beheld, that crisp January morning, trundling across the yard half

propped on the shoulders of Jerry and his assistants. A stern look from my father had checked Mr. Shackelford's inclination to sneer, and froze the giggle on my brother Tom's lips. Quite a procession of people, white and black, followed the sulky, my father leading the way. The inventor, with his hand through Doctor Erasmus Whitthorne's arm, brought up the rear. As he passed through the carriage gateway, he turned and waved a joyous greeting to my mother. I looked up at her; tears were streaming down her face. "Poor, poor boy!" she murmured, waving her slim white hand in return.

"Why, mother," I remonstrated, "the One-Wheel Sulky Man is not a *boy*!"

"Can I go? Oh, let me go!" I begged eagerly. She nodded, and I raced across the yard, accompanied by Mandy and pursued by my grumbling black mammy.

In the wide road in front of the gate a crowd had gathered, for a hint of the momentous exhibition had somehow got abroad. There were several men from the village, and



all the idlers from about the neighborhood. These lined the highway, or perched upon the fences along the proposed route, which led past Good Cheer orchards and the smithy, and along the straggling lane of houses beyond, even to the town square. By the time I arrived Dugald Dalgetty, a gray buggy horse, speedy but steady, had been harnessed between the shafts. He looked around with mild curiosity (my father never suffered blinders on his horses) at the monstrous thing behind him, but stood patiently while buckles were fastened and straps adjusted. My father sat in his own buggy, ready to accompany the sulky on its perilous way. He looked on with set, anxious face. He held out an unconscious hand to me, and I climbed to the seat beside him. "Fer Gawd's sake, Marse John!" shrieked my black mammy, "you gwine ter git dat onliest gal-chile o' ou'n hutted!" He did not even hear her.

The inventor tossed his scarlet-lined cloak upon the sulky seat, and set a foot on the low-hung step. It took, seemingly, all of Jerry's

powerful strength to keep the abnormal vehicle from careening over. But Jerry steadied it, the inventor stood for one second poised lightly on one foot, with the reins in his hand, like Phaeton in the Chariot of the Sun. To this day I can see him, light, lithe, and graceful, looking down with calm contempt on the silently-grinning crowd. Then, turning a reassuring glance on my father, he seated himself, tightened the reins, Jerry stepped aside, and Dugald Dalgetty trotted off.

At the very first turn of the wheel, the lightly-balanced seat began to sway from side to side; the horse, startled by the feel of it, then terrified by the sight of it, and further alarmed by the sudden excited shout of the spectators, leaped forward, and tore away in frenzied flight up the road. "I knew it! Oh my God!" groaned my father, leaning forward and urging his own horse to frantic speed. I clung to him, too frightened even to cry aloud. With fascinated eyes I watched the One-Wheel Sulky Man, now toppling almost to the ground on one side, now borne to the other, now

thrown high in the air, with the reins still grasped in his hand.

In far less time than it takes to tell the tale, Dugald Dalgetty had passed over the level stretch of road in front of our place, and was rounding the square turn of the peach-orchard. Just here came the end. The sulky, grazing a corner of the rail fence, went down with a splintery crash; Dugald, loosed from the shafts, went thundering on, leaving invention and inventor an indistinguishable mass on the ground. Another groan burst from my father's lips; as we drew up alongside the wreck, he threw the reins to me and sprang out. Almost before he reached him, however, the hapless inventor had staggered to his feet. A thin stream of blood trickled from a gash in his forehead, blurring his eyes. He wiped the blood away with one hand, and held out the other to my father without a word, and stood staring at the wreck of his hopes, like one in a dream.

Meantime the panic-stricken crowd had come up, breathless, and gathered around.

The blacksmith, too busy perhaps to watch the start of the sulky, came out of his shop with a huge hammer in his hand. He surveyed the ruin for a moment in contemptuous silence, then burst into loud, heartless, and prolonged laughter.

“Oho! Oho! Ho!” he cried, holding his sides, his leather apron fairly wrinkling with his mirth. “One-wheel sulky, eh! This comes of stuck-up ijits thinkin’ they knows the blacksmith’s trade! Serves him right! Oho! Ho! Ho!”

The One-Wheel Sulky Man had raised his head at the first echo of Mr. Marbury’s laugh. He tightened his grasp on my father’s arm, who had opened indignant lips, and waited until the conclusion of the brutal speech. Then he walked deliberately forward, his blue eyes fixed steadily upon the blacksmith, who quailed uneasily as he advanced. Coming up to him, he seized the hammer from his hand, and jerked it upward and outward with an easy turn of his wrist. It sailed far above the heads of the crowd, whizzing dully as it

went, and fell at an incredible distance down the road. The spot where it touched ground is to this day known to the folk thereabout as “The Hammer-Touch.”

Before it dropped, however, the One-Wheel Sulky Man had shot out a long arm with a white fist at its extremity, and smote the bully fairly between the eyes. Mr. Marbury went down like a toppling boulder, and a wild cheer went up from the crowd.

Later, when a vocabulary supported Jaco-  
netta’s wisdom, she called this The Downfall  
of the Blacksmith, referring less to the lit-  
eral fact than to the sudden blighting of her  
own tender hopes.

A hushed silence pervaded the dining-room  
at Good Cheer that day. Even the blatant  
Calvinist held his peace. My mother’s glance  
turned with wistful questioning more than  
once toward my father, who sat, anxious and  
disturbed, at the foot of the board. He merely  
shook his head. The inventor, on his return  
from the scene of his disaster, had gone to his  
own quarters in the garçonière.

“He des settin’ dar,” said Cæsar, his body-servant, “befo’ de fiah, hangin’ his head an’ lookin’ like he see sompn in de coals. He ain’ say nothin’, no ’m, Mis’ Sybil, he ain’ open his mouf. Mammy, she say dass de way folkses looks when dey see sperrits. No ’m, Mis’ Sybil, he ain’ tech de vittles you saunt him. He des settin’ yander in de office. Des settin’, an’ settin’, an’ thinkin’, an’ thinkin’. I reckon dat sulky gwine ter be de las’ o’ his projickin’.”

That night, somewhere in the dead hours, I started up in my bed, waked by the well-known strains of the piccolo. The weird sound swelled and vibrated on the air, wavered to a heart-broken moan, and ceased abruptly. I turned to my pillow, murmuring sleepily, “To-morrow I will tell the One-Wheel Sulky Man how sorry I am.”

But to-morrow there was no One-Wheel Sulky Man at Good Cheer. He had vanished as mysteriously as he had come. His battered portmanteau was gone, and his Spanish cloak, and the worn leather case of the piccolo. But when my mother opened the door of her



sleeping-chamber that next morning, there on the sill lay the little piccolo, a mute, but oh! how eloquent an offering from a bruised and grateful soul. We never heard of the One-Wheel Sulky Man afterward. I hope that peace attended his footsteps, wherever he wandered.

His piccolo, lying on a shelf with Uncle Zan's banjo, is under my eyes as I write.

## V

### UNCLE ZAN'S BANJO

As for the blacksmith, all Jaconetta's love was turned, as the novelists say, to hatred. She would have liked to fetch him a second blow between the peepers with her own fist. Indeed, she often dreamed of doing so, seeing herself in fancy standing with folded arms and triumphant head over her prostrate foe, while an admiring cloud of witnesses cheered and shouted with one accord, "Hail! All hail, Jaconetta!" But this ambition, confided to Mandy, was at once discountenanced by that more worldly-wise, woolly-headed young person. "Mist' Marbury," she declared, and doubtless with reason, "could squeegee the bream out'n folks d'out winkin' his lef' eye." Her small mistress was fain to content herself with making faces at Mist' Marbury as she drove by in the carriage, or with glaring at him from the

top rail of the orchard fence opposite the smithy, whither with Mandy she often repaired.

The heart, however, is said never to be so susceptible as just after it has been broken. One love ejected, another treadeth hard on its heels!

One morning, escaping from Doctor Erasmus Whitthorne and the blue-back Speller in the library, and from black Mammy spicing rose-leaves in the still-room, I went down to the negro quarters with Mandy to see Uncle Zan. Uncle Zan was a decrepit old negro who had belonged to my grandfather. He was very black, with a fringe of snow-white wool around his bald crown, and a huge bush of bristly white brows overhanging his keen red eyes. He had long ceased to do any work, his sole business consisting in "keeping" the smaller pickaninnies while their fathers and mothers were in the fields. He was chock-full of "cunjer" and hoodoo tales; tales of birds and beasts, and tales of his own life in Africa, where he was kidnaped when a child, and whence he had been fetched in a slave-ship to

America. These last stories he could seldom be induced to tell nowadays, but he was ever ready with the others. He sat on sunny days in the dooryard of his cabin, his hide-bottom chair tilted against the wall, his white old head drooped to his breast, his bony old fingers touching the strings of his banjo in hushed undertone to his talk, while the dusky babies toddled about, now and again caressing his knee with their small paws. His banjo was old and odd-looking. He got from it unheard-of sounds, — elemental tones, direct, simple, yet curiously searching, as if some creature wandering out of the primeval forest, where it had dwelt alone since its birth, spoke through the strings. “I gwine ter give you my banjo when I dies, Mis’ Ma’y,” Uncle Zan never failed, when he saw me, to remark. “But, tek warnin’, honey. Hit ’s cunjere, dish yer banjo is. If you lets anybody tech it cepn yo’self, you gwine ter shivel up fum yo’ haid to yo’ foot. An’ if you gives it away, you sholy gwine ter perish mizable offn de face o’ de yeth.”

The banjo did come into my possession when Uncle Zan died, at the ripe age, according to his own count, of one hundred and forty-three years. I would give much to know whether any other fingers could pick out of it such music as Uncle Zan used to do. But with the awful consequences of such an experiment staring me in the face, I have never dared to allow any one to try. Fain too would I ere now have presented it to some curious unmusical collector, who would lock it up in a cabinet, and thus ensure me against shivering up. But I do not want to perish off the face of the earth, and miserably at that. So Uncle Zan's banjo continues to occupy its place on the shelf near the piccolo of the One-Wheel Sulky Man.

Uncle Zan that morning was sitting as usual in his pleasant dooryard. The China-berry trees in full bloom were raining upon his bald pate their fragrant pale-blue blossoms; the flag-lilies stood up waxen-white against the fence; the cabin-walls were festooned with flowering honeysuckle. The pickaninnies

swarmed over the grass-plot, now screeching in noisy glee, now awed into silence by a sudden guttural growl from their keeper. He was picking his banjo-strings in unison with a chorus which came floating in from the nearest field-gang: —

*Mary wep' an' Marthy mo'n,*

*(Zoo-del-loo !)*

*Mary wep' an' Marthy mo'n,*

*Mary wep' an' de bell done tone.*

*(Zoo-del-loo !)*

He broke off on seeing me. "Hoo!" he cried, "heah 's de chile. I knowed she gwinter come, caze de string dat pull de latch on de cabin-do' done been jerk' dis mawnin' befo' sun-up. Hit uz yo' sperrit, honey, done lef' yo' body an' come to jerk dat latch-string."

I trembled with terror and delight. "Tell me a story, Uncle Zan," I demanded, seating myself on the doorstep.

"One time," began Uncle Zan — and this was one of Uncé Zan's finest virtues; he never waited to be urged; he wasted no time in hemming and hawing; neither did he



think it necessary to work up to his story by a tedious preliminary, such as some storytellers weary their hearers withal, but plunged boldly and delightfully into the heart of it — “One time wuz a ole she-owel lived in de eedge o’ de swamp. She wuz monsus high-sperrited, an’ her fambly wuz dat skeered o’ ole Mis’ Owel, dey fair trimble ef she open her lef’ eye. But she mighty perlite todes de neighbors. An’ one Thu’sday mawnin, she sot an’ thunk how she gwine ter show her manners to de Jay-bird what live in de yether eedge o’ de swamp. Caze you knows, honey, de Jay-bird totes sand to de Debble on a Friday, an’ ole Mis’ Owel she feared Mist’ Jay-bird mought fotch a bad tale concernin’ o’ her to dat genterman. She des as skeered o’ de Debble as dem chillen-owels wuz o’ her! So, she sot an’ thunk nigh about a hour. Den, she call up a young he-owel mighty nigh as big as he maw. But he fair trimble when she call him, he so skeered. ‘Joom,’ she say (dat young owel name Joom) ‘Joom, go cross de swamp, an’ mek my compliment ter Mist’ Jay-bird, an’

ax him will he loand me some sugar, spice, an' cider.' She ain't to say *need* none o' dem seasonins ; but she want to show her manners to Mist' Jay-bird. 'Yessum,' Joom say. An' Joom starts arunnin' todes the yether eedge o' de swamp, sayin' to hisse'f, 'sugar, spice, an' cider,' 'sugar, spice, an' cider,' 'sugar, spice, an' cider,' lessen he forgit befo' he mek dem manners to Mist' Jay-bird. He runnin' erlong lickety-split, an' he mos' thoo half o' de swamp when he stump his toe gins a rotten log, an' stop to hop eroun' an' holler. Den he goes on, but stidder sayin' 'sugar, spice, an' cider,' he say '*saw-dus', sof'-soap, an' surrup,*' '*saw-dus', sof'-soap, an' surrup.*' He knowed dat did n' soun' des right, but he can't hep' hisse'f. '*Saw-dus', sof'-soap, an' surrup,*' '*saw-dus', sof'-soap, an' surrup.*' All at once he hear sompn, *buckety, buckety, buckety!* He look twix de cypus trees an', lo an behole, heah come Brer Rabbit mighty nigh as' high as de gret-house yander. His eyes wuz big as wagin wheels an' his ears wuz p'inted eenermos' to de sky. Joom wuz

dat flustered dat he fall down in a fit. Brer Rabbit jumped plum over him an' went on *buckety, buckety, buckety*, caze he gwine to visit Mist' Billy Goat. An' when Joom come to hisse'f he done fergot wher he gwine an' what he gwine fer. 'Ter who is I gwine?' he ax hisse'f, an' he 'gun to say, '*Ter-who? Ter-who?*' He feared to go back to his mammy. An' so, dar he is in the swamp, sometime in one cypus, sometime in 'a'ner, evermo' axin' '*Ter-who? Ter-who?*'"

(Unc Zan here drew his fingers across the banjo's stomach, making a deep plaintive howl.) "An' dem yether screech-owels in de swamp dey laughs *he-he-he-he-he-he!*" (A sound to curdle the marrow in the bones shrieked up and down the banjo's throat.)

"Dass all, honey. An' when I dies, I gwine ter give you my banjo. An' if you lets anybody else tech it, you gwine to shivel up fum yo' haid to yo' foot. An' if you gives my banjo away, you gwine to perish mizable offn de face o' de yeth."

"Oh, Uncle Zan! what a bee-yu-teful

tale !” I breathed. I knew it by heart, having already heard it a thousand times. But is not the Rubaiyat ever new !

“ Did Mist’ Jay-bird tell the Devil on Joom’t’h ma ?” demanded a voice, unknown and invisible.

I jumped up and ran around the corner of the cabin.

And there, peering through the althea bushes at Uncle Zan, was Johnny.

## VI

### JOHNNY

My heart went pit-a-pat when I laid eyes — for the first time — on Johnny peeping through Uncle Zan's althea bushes. He was a whity-brown little boy about my own age, or perhaps a year younger. His freckled face was browned to a crisp by the sun ; his tousled hair and his eyelashes were white ; he had whity-blue watery eyes ; his trousers, shirt, and single "gallus" were brown. He was barefoot ; his front teeth were missing. He was the son of the shoemaker who lived on the further side of the village, and he had strayed to Good Cheer in company with some older boys who had run away and left him. He had been crying ; his face was tear-stained and grimy from its contact with his dirty knuckles. I thought him beautiful.

Notwithstanding Mandy's sniffs and sneers — Mandy, like the rest of her race, had a profound contempt for what in those days we knew as "po' white trash." "Ou' fambly" was the standard of aristocracy, "ou' gret house" the synonym for elegance. And indeed it is remarkable how keen the instinct of the negro is in certain directions. Like children they seem to be gifted with a sort of second sight which pierces the envelope both of poverty and riches. For example, everybody in the Quarters, from Unc Zan down to the smallest pickaninny, knew that the One-Wheel Sulky Man in his threadbare garments was a gentleman; it was a privilege to hold his horse, black his shabby boots, or tote in wood for his fire. The rich and prosperous Mr. Jim Bulger, who drove over occasionally from his plantation to dine at our house, was almost openly despised by the negroes, though his manners had but a slight tinge of vulgarity, and he was quite openhanded with the "niggers," as in his blustering voice he called them. (Since coming to woman's estate



I have learned that Mr. Bulger had been a negro-trader “ wher he come fum.”)

In spite of Mandy’s disdain, I allied myself at once with the whity-brown boy. I drew him by the hand from his sylvan retreat among the althea bushes, to the doorstep, where I regarded him for some time in speechless admiration. Finding Uncle Zan obdurate on the subject of another story — he bent his red eyes on Johnny in a tremendous scowl and swept his banjo strings into angry and discordant thunder, making that young person cower and whimper and “shivel” almost into nothingness — I departed with my newly-discovered treasure to my own garden, where until the alarmed shoemaker in pursuit of his wandering heir pounced upon him and bore him kicking and bellowing homeward, we passed the hours blissfully — pulling up the young pea-vines and tender cabbage-plants to see how they grew, and replanting them, poor things !

Johnny now reigned supreme in Jaconetta’s heart. She saw him from the carriage-window

in her occasional visits to the village with her mother. At such times he would be playing in front of his father's shop, or marching up and down the gallery of their small cottage carrying a whity-brown infant sister. He invariably turned turkey-cock red at sight of his lady love, and if acting as nurse, dropped the whity-brown baby and scurried out behind the chimney, to peep and laugh boisterously. As often as he could escape maternal vigilance, he stole over to Good Cheer and into Jaconetta's garden, but fled at that young woman's approach and had to be recaptured each time, and each time reduced anew to a state of lover-like submission. Once, emboldened by Jaconetta's wooing smiles, he proposed a trip to London; his father, the shoemaker, born and bred in that metropolis, having doubtless described its glories in a way to make Johnny's mouth water with a desire to behold them with his own eyes. How we started to London town, inquiring the way of various horsemen and pedestrians in the plantation lane as we went; how we

strayed into the familiar bit of wood and there got lost; how Johnny stoutly maintained that London was jest over yander, crost the branch; how I wept and belabored Johnny with my own fists, how we were rescued by a searching-party — all this would furnish forth an epic! Even the sight of the sound spanking administered to my fellow-traveler on the spot — and the seat of his trousers — by the shoemaker, did not diminish but rather augmented my affection for the sufferer. I continued to adore him, although my brother Tom, aided by Hart and Charley and even by the twins, derided me, and spat upon him both metaphorically and literally. Recognizing my brother Tom as the ring-leader of a conspiracy, Jaconetta burned to revenge herself — and Johnny.

## VII

### THE BLUE JUG

ON a small mahogany table in our parlor stood a blue porcelain jar — more properly a vase — known to us as The Blue China Jug. It was tall and slender ; a dragon with scales and long, horny tail writhed about it, his slim, upreared head and neck forming the shapely handle ; the color was a heavenly blue, shading here and there into a still diviner green. My mother's uncle, an officer in the United States Navy, had fetched this vase over from China, along with a great mottled bowl, a pair of enormous covered jars, and many plates and platters. (I used always to imagine China a great cupboard with glass doors, crammed with cups and saucers, trays, bowls, and the like.) The Blue China Jug had become for us children an object of regard, not to say

veneration. We almost ko-towed to it. We crept in, sometimes together, hand in hand, sometimes singly, to tiptoe across the two long parlors, edging carefully around the gleaming reflection of table and vase on the bare, polished floor, to gaze, fascinated, down the gaping throat of the dragon, or with a timidly respectful finger to touch the graceful curve of the vase itself. The great spice-jars on either side of the fireplace, whence, when they were uncovered, arose perfumes as from Araby the Blest, hardly drew so much as a glance in their direction; the mottled bowl, on its own separate carved and claw-footed table, left us as indifferent as the portraits of our forbears on the walls. But we trembled with rapture before the shimmering, pulsing blue-green glory of the jug.

I do not remember when we began to "claim" the Blue China Jug. I only know that first, within my recollection, my brother Tom held mythical possession of it. "The Blue China Jug belongs to me." I remember the solemn announcement, as if it had been

yesterday that I heard it for the first time. Though filled with envy, none of us ever dreamed of disputing the assertion. I think we really quite understood that the jug was owned and possessed by the heads of the family. But there was a world with which the heads of the family had naught to do. And many things which seemed theirs were ours in this imaginary world, — our world. I am sure, though I cannot prove it by figure or rule, that we got more out of these (appropriated) treasures than they did!

The Blue China Jug was never, like other and less shadowy possessions, lightly traded off. When for any sufficient reason it passed from one owner to another, the transaction was a very solemn one. We were all called to witness the transfer; and we afterward stole in more hushed than ever, to view the property which had been Tom's or Hart's, but was now become Charley's or the twins'. It was a long time before I had anything within my gift which was deemed of sufficient value to swap for the Blue China Jug. It had passed from



Tom to Hart on the occasion of the latter acquiring — from the very great-uncle who had delved into the cupboard aforementioned — a knife of many blades, which Hart protested could cut the liver out of a rattlesnake. My brother Tom so yearned after that knife (having himself but a sorry Barlow) that after long inward struggles he offered the jug in exchange for it. Hart did not even play holding off; he snapped at the bargain. Hearts were crossed in a jiffy; witnesses were called, and a pilgrimage made to the parlor to view Hart's Blue China Jug. (The knife, I am sorry to say, was lost that same day in the hayloft, and Tom was left to (honorable) repentance.) Charley next became owner by virtue of passing over to Hart for his sole use and command a little negro boy named Lige, "claimed" by li'l Marse Charley as his property. Charley held on to his treasure for a long time; but, weakly yielding at last to temptation, disposed of it in his turn to the twins for the privilege of fishing for "pyerch" in the spring-branch with the hook and line

belonging to those young gentlemen. "'N' I never caught nary pyerch," he moaned later in impotent regret.

From the twins the Blue China Jug reverted to my brother Tom, a mere mess of pottage, i. e. a hunk of gingerbread, being the ignoble price. Tom, now realizing the value of his possession, held fast to it, in spite of many tempting offers, chiefly from myself, who was filled with envy and covetousness.

One day Sarah Bulger came over from her father's plantation to spend the day at Good Cheer. Sarah, a bouncing maid of eight years, was undisguisedly "sweet" on my brother Tom. She followed him about, giggling and nudging elbows in a manner which he loudly declared "squishy" and mean. At last, having failed, in modern parlance, to "shake" Sarah, he announced his intention of going out to his "pattridge-trap," muttering something as he started about girls being "plaguey" tiresome. I was aghast at the swear-word, knowing how the least approach to profanity was forbidden about our place. But Sarah only threw up

her head and giggled more loudly than ever, and went tagging after him across the yard. Upon this the masculine worm turned. "You go back, Sarah Bulger," he shouted, stooping to pick up a stone. "If you don't I'll rock you. Follerin' me aroun' same as Sis follers that sassy sore-toe Shoemaker-Johnny!"

And as Sarah continued to gallop after him he actually threw the stone at her; no sooner had it left his hand, however, than he was filled with shame and remorse. Sarah, unhurt but pierced to her soul, (did I not know the feeling!) began to cry aloud. I put my arm around her. I did not like Sarah Bulger, but on this occasion sympathy — and thought of the maligned John — drew me to her side. "I'm goin' to tell on you, Mister Tom," I shouted wrathfully, "I'm goin' to tell on you this minute. You said a bad word, an' you throwed a rock at poor Sarah Bulger. Oh, I'll tell father on you. I'll get you a good whippin'."

Poor brother Tom! He ran over to us pallid and trembling. "I did n't hit you, Sarah,

did I?" he gasped. Sarah Bulger only shrugged her shoulders and cried on. Hatful thing! she knew well enough he never hit her! "Oh, Sis," he implored with tears in his voice, "don't tell on me! Please don't tell on me. I—I did n't mean to hurt Sarah Bulger. I'll give Johnny my new ball if you won't tell."

"I'm going to tell on you this minute," I reiterated sternly.

"Oh, Sis," he pleaded, running along by my side, "don't tell. Oh, don't tell. If you won't tell, I'll, I'll"—he brightened up, poor fellow, and almost smiled—"I'll give you my blue china jug!"

For one swift second I own I wavered. The glory of owning the Blue China Jug—so long and so hopelessly desired—almost made me swoon with emotion. But the memory of my wrongs—and Johnny's—hardened my heart. "I don't want your old blue china jug," I cried; "I'm goin' to tell on you right now, Mister. Oh, I'll get you a good whippin'."

And I did tell. I gloried in the commotion my story made in the house. I perked up my head when the tale was ended, and marched back into the yard to invite Mister Tommy to a conference with his elders in the library. But somehow when he had passed in with hanging head and a reproachful look at me out of the tail of his eye, I suddenly ceased to feel complacent. I wondered what was the matter with me; and I loathed Sarah Bulger from the bottom of my soul.

Presently I saw my father pass with Master Tom behind him to the tool-house; he stopped to cut a switch from a drooping elm-branch, and then the tool-house door closed upon him and the culprit.

My brother Tom's howls echoing from the tool-house filled me with an agony of remorse. I rushed over to the summer-house, and burying my face in my arms vainly sought to stifle the sound of those awful cries. I could not then have expressed my feelings, but I knew myself for a mean contemptible Tell-tale, a small female Cain whose brow was branded with a brother's blood.

Many years have passed since that lovely May afternoon at Good Cheer. My brother Tom, gray-headed and portly, — a veritable *vieux moustache* of two wars, who has had innumerable ups and downs in this Vale of Tears — had quite forgotten the incident just recorded until I reminded him of it the other day. He roared with laughter.

Indeed, if I remember aright, the sun set not on his wrath even on that fatal day (he never could bear malice, my brother Tom!) and he generously presented me with the Blue China Jug in recognition of my services as pacificator between him and Sarah Bulger.

But Jaconetta has never been able to think without a pang of the whipping she “got” him. She would have given a dozen blue china jugs that May day to be able to wipe it all out of her memory. So would she now; poor Jaconetta!



## VIII

### THE DUTCH DOLL

THE carriage, with Uncle Jerry on the box, came around the shelled drive from the stable-yard and drew up in front of the gallery steps. It was my opinion at that time that there was not elsewhere in the whole world, and had never been, such a turnout (it is true that I had not then heard of the Lord Mayor's coach at London). It was very roomy, with broad, well-cushioned seats, tasseled arm-rests, glistening windows, lap-rugs, footwarmers, and the like. There was a seat behind to which, when we took our summer journeys to the Springs, a trunk was strapped. On ordinary occasions it was occupied by Cupid, a half-grown negro lad, whose duty it was to jump down when we stopped, open the carriage-door, and let down the folding steps with a flourish and a bang that were highly imposing. Two sleek well-

groomed bay horses with flowing manes and tails drew the carriage when we were driving about the neighborhood ; on longer journeys these were replaced by a pair of powerful mouse-colored mules, slow but very staid and sure-footed. Jerry was proud to vaingloriousness of the whole outfit ; I still think with reason. I sometimes go out to the coach-house, as it is now called, and survey the wreck of ancient grandeur which stands there yet, relegated of course to an obscure corner, and wholly given over to cobweb-weaving spiders, granddaddy-long-legs, laying hens, and reflections of its own sumptuous past. It hath methinks a stately look, this superannuated conveyance, and a large and ample courtliness not known to the modern generation of vehicles ; even now, with its sturdy wheels and thick tires, its honest springs, and handmade bolts and nuts, it would outwear a dozen of the supercilious and flimsy dog-carts, run-about, and phaetons, forsooth ! drawn up in smirk newness of paint and nickel-plate in the airy region beyond it.

Yesterday, having delivered myself in much this same strain apropos of the venerable family-carriage, the flock of girls visiting my daughter Sybil — a house party she calls it; we had the thing in our day and time, and most royally managed too, though in our ignorance we knew it not! — Sybil and her house party ganged after me to the coach-house to behold with their own eyes this relic of ante-bellum splendor. The unmannerly young women and the degenerate young men shrieked with laughter when at my orders the disgusted coachman — an unworthy descendant of Uncle Jerry — and his assistants drew the old carriage forth from its corner and into the garish light of day. The young men pulled open the dusty doors and let down the dusty steps; then one after another, the young women, setting their slippered feet daintily and gingerly upon the steps, mounted and seated themselves on the faded cushions within. The whole six of them were comfortably housed. “What a ridiculous old ark!” tittered one, pruning her plumage and preen-

ing like a ringdove. "How grandmamma Noah must have enjoyed her naps here!" cried another. My Sybil's pretty face looked out at me through the glassless window frame. "It must be a hundred years old at least, isn't it, mamma?" Involuntarily I put my hand to my head, where there are truly not more than a dozen gray hairs; and I was momentarily indignant, seeing that I remembered quite well the day the "new" carriage was first rolled into the Good Cheer stable-yard. Then, bethinking me how, even when she was a slim young thing, pretty and fragile as a wind-flower, I regarded my own mother as the oldest person in the world, I held my peace!

Sybil, opening the door to descend, caught the edge of her lace sleeve in the ancient lock and uttered a little shriek of dismay. Quick as a flash there came to me a vision of my mother, another Sybil, but far prettier to be sure, leaning back among the carriage cushions, pale and heroically silent, while Doctor Erasmus Whitthorne, after he had unwittingly

shut the heavy door, catching her delicate forefinger in its vise-like grasp, made his courtly and ponderous adieux through the window; the forefinger was maimed for life, but the good old doctor never knew.

All this is a digression.

The carriage came around that June afternoon and waited before the front steps while mammy, with exasperating carefulness, finished my toilette. "Oh, mammy, please, *please* hurry!" I besought with tears in my eyes, writhing and wriggling under her hands; "the party 'll be over before I get there."

"Lawd, chile (stan' still, honey, whilse I fix yo' pant'lettes), you ain' axed to come ontell fo' o'clock. (Ef you don't lemme curl yo' hair you cahnt go' 'tall.) Dem ten Barclay chillen ain' gwine to be ready, nohow. (Ef you don't quit histin' yo' shoulders, I hatter quit.) 'Sides, who *is* de Barclays! Dey hires ever' nigger dat works fer 'em. Lawd, mammy's sugar-gal, you gwine to shine like de full moon! (Stan' still fer yo' po' ole

mammy; I gwine ter call Mis' Sybil ef you don't 'have yo'se'f!)"

However, all things earthly have an end. My skirts were given a final pat, my sash smoothed out, my coral necklace clasped, and I was put into the carriage with Jane, my mother's own maid; my mother herself came out to see me off, and to give Jane a final admonition concerning me; we rolled grandly away. My brothers had already gone — or Charley and the twins at least; Tom and Hart having bribed these to fetch back some party, that is, cake and candy, had scornfully elected to stay at home.

The Barclays lived in the village in a pretty white house buried in trees and shrubbery. There was no one in the big grassy yard when we arrived, and no one on the gallery; the house seemed deserted, though I heard wild shrieks from somewhere within as I paced slowly up the flower-bordered walk to the door. My heart was beating painfully and I gripped Jane's hand very hard; for the life of me I could not have told why, seeing





"OH, MAMMY, PLEASE, PLEASE HURRY!"



that I had made mud-pies with the ten Barclays ever since I was born. In my riper experience even, I am not sure I can explain the sort of sickening terror which assails one on reaching the outer confines of a "party." Lives there a woman who would not at the last moment turn tail and fly if she dared! Or who does not shiver and shake in the dressing-room, dreading to descend the stair, catching at the faintest excuse to remain forever in that friendly shelter! On this occasion instinctive faint-heart seemed justified by the surprised greeting of Melie Barclay, who opened the door to me. "Why, what ever *made* you come so soon! Th' ain't but seven of us dressed. Jimmy's in the tub now. That's him hollerin'. 'N' the syllabub ain't *made*. 'N' the *snowballs* ain't baked."

I could have dropped dead with shame and confusion. But a word from Mrs. Barclay at the head of the stair, and the sight of Johnny entering the front gate in all the bravery of his Sunday clothes, accompanied by my much-betousled brothers, reassured me.

I shall never forget the Barclay party. It was, so far as I can remember, my first party. All that golden afternoon I lived in a state of ecstasy, which to my backward gaze seems almost pathetic. I can see the children still, myself among them, "star-scattered on the grass;" I can hear their shrill voices united in musical discord in "Ring around rosy," "Oats, peas, beans," and "We come to see Miss Jinny-an'-Joe." I can feel again the bashful thrill which intoxicated me when in due course of "Kiss your true love in the field," Johnny bestowed a moist caress upon my left ear. Alas, little did I dream that all this bliss was to end in misery. Little did I suspect that the illogical Nemesis afore mentioned was even then hard upon my heels, bearing in her arms avengement for that whipping I "got" my brother Tom!

"You all jus' wait," puffed Jimmy Barclay, — all traces of the tub and the tussle with his black mammy obliterated from his smeary face and grass-stained kilts, — while we were stuffing ourselves with syllabub and cake on the

back gallery. "You jus' wait. You goin' to see sompn. In the dinin'-room. M-m-m-m!"

"What, oh, what?"

"'F you don't tell me I won't len' you my chiny taw."

"Betcher I know."

"Oh, *wow!* (this from Jimmy) you quit a-pinchin' me, Melie Barclay! It's a" —

"It's a Dutch Doll!" shouted Melie, crimson with the effort to get ahead of Jimmy.

Then, with a last longing, reproachful glance at the empty syllabub bowl, we all piled pell-mell into the dining-room to see the Dutch Doll.

## IX

### THE PASSING OF JOHNNY

THE crystal chandeliers in the Barclay dining-room were blazing with candles ; chairs for the audience were placed in a semicircle at one end of the long room ; the great dining-table was pushed against the wall at the other end ; it was covered with a red cloth which hung down to the floor. From beneath this curtain-like drapery, we were given to understand by the ten Barclay children in a breath, the Dutch Doll would come forth. "Jes' you wait ! you'll see It ! — It'll walk out ! Uncle Bob says so. It'll dance. It'll sing. It'll — oh, jes' you wait !"

A Dutch Doll, I have since learned, is a sort of marionette compounded in this wise : the performer, a grown person, crouching behind a curtain, places his hands in a pair of



big hob-nailed shoes ; his head is adorned with a wide-frilled white cap ; a blue apron-like garment, fastened about his neck with a drawing string, falls to the tops of his shoes ; a pair of false arms, encased in ample sleeves, hang loose, and may be manipulated by slipping a hand from a shoe and jerking the strings attached. The whitened face is very much made up — the eyes rounded, the mouth widened, the nose grotesquely streaked with red paint. In this guise the Dutch Doll shuffles out from behind the curtain and goes through a performance, limited only by the ingenuity of the intelligence within the cap-frill, or the endurance of the spectators. It is said to be very amusing — the Dutch Doll. This, alas ! I can neither affirm or deny in my own person.

“ Look-ee ! Hi ! Look-ee ! I see a teenchyweenchy piece of It’s shoes ! ”

“ It’s comin’ ! It’s comin’ ! ”

“ Oh-h-h-h ! Ah-h-h-h ! ”

A quiver of expectation, not unmingled with fear, ran through the assembly. Slow

ghost-like music came stealing in from the parlor, where Mrs. Barclay sat beside her tall gilded harp. By the way, I wonder if any modern mother of ten cavortin' boys and torn-down girls (such was the repute of the Barclays), fat, moreover, and a housewife whose still-room recipes are sought after by half a dozen parishes — I say I wonder if any such in these emancipated days finds time to play on the harp; aye, and ravish the souls of her listeners withal! But this question savors of approaching age. I hasten to recall it.

There was a ruffle along the lower edge of the red table-cover. A voice suspiciously like the Barclays' Uncle Bob's uttered a gruff "Look out there!" from under the table. Another moment, and —

Something like an altercation had arisen in the hall outside; the harp music ceased and Mrs. Barclay's soft drawl penetrated into the dining-room in surprised remonstrance: —

"But, you cahnt take the child home *now*. She cahnt go. The pawty is not over. You must wait."

“No ’m, Mis’ Barclay, ef you please” (the shrill tones were Jane’s). “I’m ’bleeged to take her. Mis’ Sybil tol’ me to fetch her home at seven o’clock. She’ll be oneasy, ma’am, if little Miss ain’t fotch home.”

A hand of iron had clutched my heart at the first word of this dialogue. I heard Jane’s respectful but firm reply in a frozen silence. Then I lifted up my voice and began to howl dismally.

The Dutch Doll, if he, she, or it had meditated immediate appearance, must have retired precipitately before the hubbub which ensued. Mrs. Barclay, divided between just indignation over my disappointment and her instinctive understanding of my mother’s anxiety, alternately scolded and soothed. Jane held volubly firm to her wu’d to Mis’ Sybil, the Barclays’ Uncle Bob ramped and roared angrily somewhere out of sight, Melie expostulated with tears; ejaculations of impatience arose from the unsympathetic younger Barclays; and all this was dominated by my own despairing shrieks.

“I won’t go home, I won’t! I won’t! Oh, Jane, *please* let me stay! I’ll give you my Blue China Jug! Yes I will! I’ll tell my black mammy on you! I’ll tell mother! Oh, Jane, *Jane!* I’ll slap you! I’ll tell father! Oh, please, *please*, Jane! I have n’t seen the D-D-Dutch D-D-Doll!”

By this time I was struggling and kicking in Jane’s arms. Even now it seems to me that my agony must have melted a stone. Mrs. Barclay’s cheeks I know were wet with tears; and the hidden uncle was swearing horribly. The children had fallen suddenly silent — appalled I imagine by the tragedy of my swift taking off. Suddenly out of their midst, as Jane stepped across the thresh-old with her prisoner, a voice arose, clear, callous, and cruel, “I ’m glad she ’s gone. Ain’t you! gals is sech cry-babies. *Now* we kin see the Dutch Doll.”

That voice was the voice of Johnny.

My mother, alert for the sound of wheels, came out on the gallery to meet me. I sprang panting and screaming to her arms.

(The faithful Jane must have been sorely battered as well in body as in soul. "She ain' let up a minit since I tuk un' tuk her, Mis' Sybil," she announced, smoothing her ruffled plumage. "She fit un' scratched like sompn pizen.")

"But what is the *matter*?" demanded my mother, endeavoring vainly to hush my cries.

"I w-w-want to see the D-D-Dutch D-D-Doll!" the story poured forth in a hysterical torrent, "an' J-J-Jane would n't let — let me!"

Then my mother turned upon poor Jane and berated her soundly. It was the only time I ever saw her unjust or ungentle to any one. I was fairly frightened into silence; her delicate face in the moonlight was pale with anger.

"Why, M-M-Mis' Sybil," stammered her all too faithful emissary, "you t-tol' me your own se'f to fetch her home at seven o'clock."

"If you had a grain of sense," snapped her mistress, "you would have let her stay until she wished to come home." And glaring at

Jane over her shoulder, the gentlest of souls bore me into the house.

This was (infinitesimal) balm to my wounded spirit. But it did not make up to me for the Dutch Doll. Nothing ever has. Sometimes when I am seated in an opera box or in the stalls of a theatre, watching world-famous marionettes with burning souls and heavenly voices, and bodies that are as exquisite to the beholder as the Sons of God, or the Daughters of Men who wooed them from Paradise, the fair scene and its celestial habitants fade suddenly from my sight; my inner self harks back to the long candle-lit dining-room at the Barclays'. I see once more the ring of shining faces, I tremble once more before the preliminary ruffle of that red table-cover, I catch once more a teenchy-weenchy glimpse of It's shoe-tips — and my heart aches often after that wonderful, never-beheld, lost-forever Dutch Doll.

I may add that I have laid a lesson to heart therefrom. It has made me chary of inflicting possible disappointments. When



my Sybil sets forth to some college dance, or Sunday-school picnic, or one of those innocent girlish frolics to which she is given, and the impulse is strong within me to fix the hour at which she should ring her own door-bell — at midnight, or at sundown, I check myself, remembering that Dutch Doll. When my Charley, in his trim yachting-suit, looks in on me before he hurries forth to his chums, I refrain from expressing my yearning anxiety for his return, lest he too should miss the Dutch Doll. No, no more Dutch Dolls in my family, if you please, or anywhere else if I can help it, eh, Jaconetta !

When, the very next day, Johnny came swaggering into Jaconetta's garden, brazenly unconscious of his disgrace, that young woman greeted him with studied coldness. In fact, I regret to have to record that she "rocked" him, with Mandy's help, out of the garden and off the premises. The fallen Idol cried ; and Jaconetta laughed — a queer jerky little laugh which she did not herself understand. Poor Jaconetta !

## X

### BELLER

ACCORDING to my brother Tom, Beller was a "turrible squeaky" girl. My eye and mind fully concurred in his scornful estimate of Beller's outer and visible appearance. But my heart traveled its own independent road. To use a somewhat hackneyed expression, I fairly worshiped the ground that squeaky girl trod upon. Not the blacksmith, not Johnny, nor truly, I think, not one of Jaco-netta's later loves ever wrought such havoc in her small being as Beller Grey.

Beller (spelled Bella) arrived at Good Cheer one summer noon-day. A big-bodied traveling carriage, not unlike our own, turned in at the front gate and rumbled up the drive. A brass-nailed hair trunk was strapped on behind; an outrider bestriding a dappled pony led an iron-gray saddle-horse, whose owner, Squire

Grey, stepped from the carriage when it stopped and handed forth his wife, a large, high-nosed, imposing matron, a third or fourth cousin of my father's. The squire explained puffily, while I gaped at him from behind my mother's flounces, that Lucinda (Mrs. Squire) had found the Springs ill-kept and uncomfortable. She had therefore decided to visit Cousin John and Cousin Sybil.

This proceeding was too common at Good Cheer to cause astonishment, and doubtless would long ago have passed out of my memory but for Beller. At the conclusion of her father's speech and her mother's more condescending greeting, Beller lunged down the carriage steps, and Jaconetta's pains began. On the instant, as such things were and have ever been with Jaconetta. She hath never known that slow, sweet process called falling in love. Not for her a first hardly-perceptible vibration of the bosom, evoked by the gift of a rose; or a surprised, tremulous stopping and starting of the heart at a shy touch of hands. Not for her the gradual unclosing of Cupid's

eyes, his lingering smile, his slowly hastening footsteps. No, she was ever hasty, violent, and headlong, was Jaconetta. If the Blind Boy came at all, he darted to her-ward like a thunderbolt. If he greeted her, it was not with a soft kiss on the lips, but with a smart slap in the face. Poor Jaconetta!

Beller was a year or two older than myself, — perhaps eight or nine at that time. I thought her name almost as romantic as my own self-bestowed appellation. I supposed it to refer directly to cows, and thought I could hear through its liquid syllables the mild protest of Snowdrop at milking-time, the tinkle of Buttercup's bell, the swish of Daisy's fly-brushing tail. Why, even yet —

“What is that?” I demanded only the other day of one of my brother Tom's boys, as a sort of hoarse roar came echoing across the wide stretch of the ranch range.

“Nothin’,” returned Tom, barefoot presentment of another Tom who once roamed barefoot about Good Cheer plantation, “nothin’ but ole Buttercup bellerin’ for her calf.”

A confused dream of Lombardy poplars, tall against an evening sky, with a cowpen visible through a vista of their trunks, and of our Buttercup standing patient under the milker's hands ; a smell of fresh milk, a faint far-away echo of the squeaky girl's voice ordering me about — rose up within me.

The Squire, "Mis' Squire," and Beller were installed in the left wing of our house, — a suite of rooms reserved for guests of distinction. Here they settled themselves as if they meant to stay forever. I gazed at Beller and tremblingly prayed that they might. Mrs. Squire, so called by everybody, including her husband, was, as before remarked, high-nosed and imposing. She was also formidable. Her reputation as a housekeeper, as a church member, and as a matchmaker, was something awesome. As a matchmaker, indeed, she has had few equals. She had at this time seven daughters "well" married ; and was understood to have picked out my brother Tom for Beller. (My brother Tom hated Beller. She hated him. They were afterward married.)

My mother was supposed to be mortally afraid of Mrs. Squire, though in one or two encounters the mistress of Good Cheer was at least not utterly routed. "She showed grit, Mis' Sybil did," Uncle Jake exulted to Uncle Zan in my hearing; "Mis' Squire she ordered dem v'lets onder her winder to be tuk'n tuk up an' flung erway, caze she say dey mek her sick. Mis' Sybil she order dem v'lets lef'. She des ez sof' ez puddin'-dough, but her eyes kinder blazin'; an' she say mighty mannerly dat she please to move Mis' Squire to the yether wing o' de gret house where dey ain't no v'lets. Dat done settle it, Unc' Zan. Mis' Squire ain't honin to move out 'n dem comp'ny rooms."

This personage regarded me from the first with the same sort of disgust she showed at the sight of other soiled and tumbled objects. Beller, though undeniably squeaky, wide-mouthed, and snub-nosed, had a genius for keeping herself clean. She rarely condescended to play with me — never when Sarah Bulger, Melie Barclay, or even my brother



Tom, was at hand. When she did so condescend, she was as fond of the stable-loft, the pig-pen, the hen-house, and the quarters as I was. But whereas I invariably returned from these paradises in a state of apron, hands, and pantalettes not to be described or endured, Beller would present herself as speckless and uncreased as when she set out. Whereupon Mrs. Squire would admonish her daughter not to degrade herself again by keeping company with me. She would further proceed to hold me up as a hardened reprobate, and that awfulest of created things, a Dirty Little Girl, unfit for association with a Lady. Mis' Squire's finger of scorn, pointed at me in the very presence of my Adored One, became at length more than I could bear. I was not strong enough in spirit to renounce the pigsty and the quarters; I could not for the life of me enjoy these Edens and remain immaculate like Beller. But I could (I reasoned) appease Mrs. Squire. I determined to do it, somehow, or somehow else.

## XI

### SOAP BUBBLES

As may be inferred from the foregoing revelations, Beller did not live for me as I did for her. *She* could be content with others — even with the despised Sarah Bulger ; she had secrets with Melie Barclay ; she was far more disposed to lend her sweet-gum to my brother Tom — avowedly her foe — than to me. My affections, in short, were misplaced. But Jaconetta hath ever been wooden of head and faithful of heart. It is her nature. She hath even been openly numbered among those who have to be knocked down to be instructed. Poor Jaconetta !

Meekly I endured Beller's evil entreatment. I fetched and carried for her after a fashion which made Mandy open wide her yellow eyes (Mandy was ever jealous of the Loves),

content if only she threw me a word now and then like a bone to a dog. I gave her my most cherished playthings. I led her into my most secret retreats, — into the orange-groves, the peach-orchard fence-corners, the stable-loft, the carriage-house, Uncle Zan's dooryard; I suffered her to outrun me at "How many miles to Miley-Bright," although my legs were long and light and hers clumsy and stumpy. The new-laid eggs were hers to find, the downy chicks hers to handle. I trembled lest Beller's mother should utter some final anathema which would place me forever under the ban and create a yawning gulf, like that which separated Dives from Lazarus, between me and my divinity. I burned with desire to placate Beller's mother.

At length Inspiration and Opportunity presented themselves hand in hand. To Mandy is partly due the credit of both, though I suspect that Mandy's motives were not as pure as my own.

We were over in the colt-pasture, Mandy and I. We had been lured there by a (false)

report from my brother Tom that there were partridges in his trap. He and Beller were blowing soap-bubbles (with my pipes, borrowed on the strength of this report). We had waded the spring-branch, and were seated on the further bank picking the grass-burrs from the soles of our bare feet.

*Me* (apropos of nothing at all). Mrs. Squire says I'm a dirty little girl, 'n I aint fit to play with a lady. Beller's a lady.

*Mandy* (contemptuously). *Umph*.

*Me* (firing up). She *is*, Mandy. I'll slap you, first thing you know.

*Mandy*. Dese here grass-burrs sho' is spikey.

*Me* (wistfully). I *wisht* Mrs. Squire 'd like me a teenchy-weenchy bit.

*Mandy*. Umph! Who is Mis' Squire anyhow! Unk Zeke say she ain' nobody much, wher she come fum.

Pause, during which I yearn after Beller and the soap-bubbles, and dimly suspect my brother Tom of treachery.

*Mandy* (suddenly). Aint Mis' Sybil done druv out long 'o Marse John in de cay'age?

*Me* (languidly). Yes.

*Mandy*. Ef Mis' Squire sot her lef' eye on you dress up in dat blue bonnet Marse John done fotch you fum New York, she'd —

*Me* (jumping up). Oh, Mandy! Do you reckon she would?

*Mandy* (jumping up). Ow! wow! dem grass-burrs done stuck in my heel fer kingdom come! Dat she would! Dat bonnet gwine ter tek Mis' Squar's lef' eye sho's you bawn.

*Me*. Mother said I could n't wear my bonnet till Sunday. Come on, Mandy, Mrs. Squire 'll see I'm a lady, too, like Beller!

We recrossed the branch and raced along the pasture, through the dusty stable-yard, and into the house. We pattered across my mother's room to her large armoire, the mirror-like floor reflecting our unkempt little figures. We spoke instinctively in whispers and glanced fearfully over our shoulders while Mandy pulled open the armoire doors and reached up for the bandbox. It came tumbling from the shelf; the lid dropped off,

and the blue silk bonnet rolled out and fell at my feet. "Dat 's a sign you kin put it on," remarked Mandy sagely. And I did put it on — that precious new bonnet — atop of my tangled curls. Mandy tied the dainty ribbon strings under my damp chin. I further dragged around my shoulders a white canton crape shawl which my mother reserved for the most ceremonious occasions, and tiptoed out, and down the shadowy hall, across a side gallery, to the company wing. I laid my hand on the door-knob, withdrew it fearfully, and turned to flee. But Mandy, crouched behind a rose-wreathed pillar, egged me on. I knocked boldly and waited.

I must have presented a grotesque appearance, with my bare sun-scorched, briar-scratched arms and legs, my dust-begrimed face and draggled skirts. Mrs. Squire, who opened the door herself, gazed down at me with stern majesty. "Who are you?" she demanded. The high-nosed dame did not recognize me. I exulted; I thought it was my new bonnet.



"I'm Jac-c-c-o-netta," I gasped, taken unaware.

"Jac- *what!* you! What have you come in here for, — looking like this!"

"I've c-c-ome to c-c-call on you, M-M-Mrs. S-q-q-quire!"

"*Call!* On *me!* Well, if I *ever!*" Mrs. Squire fairly panted for breath. "Your mother ought to lock you up. Ugh! Get away from here, you dirty little caterpillar!"

*Caterpillar!* I seized my blue silk bonnet with both hands and shuddered. But I saw under Mrs. Squire's elbow into the room beyond. A long shaft of sunlight, filled with dancing motes, streamed across it from a half-opened blind, and fell full upon a corner of the mantel-piece, illuminating the China Lady. The sight of that China Lady, after whom I yearned in a hardly less degree than I yearned after Beller herself, gave me fresh courage. Now was the time if ever to propitiate Beller's mother.

"I aint a caterpillar," I stammered; "I've got on my blue silk bonnet, and I've come to ca-"

Mrs. Squire slammed the door in my face. I thought of the Peri shut out of Paradise, whose pitiful story my mother had read me out of a gilt-edged book, and my throat swelled painfully. Mandy came creeping out of her hiding-place to proffer indignant sympathy. But I waved her back, and stumbled blindly along my returning way. At the edge of the gallery, hearing loud laughter and the sound of voices, I paused. On the opposite porch my brother Tom and Beller were still blowing soap-bubbles—with my pipes. Hart, Charley, and the twins were looking enviously on through a mist of tears. Jaco<sup>n</sup>etta watched the airy spheres, tinged with gold and crimson and violet, rise high in air one by one and burst. And she felt dimly that these vanished nothings were emblematic of her own hopes!

## XII

### THE CHINA LADY

FAIN would I declare that my desire to possess the China Lady arose from my adoration of Beller, her owner and mistress, but a strict regard for truth compels me to admit that I coveted the China Lady for herself alone. I wanted her because she was totally unlike anything I had ever seen, and the most beautiful of all seeable things. She was a dainty court lady in a flowered robe with pointed bodice and paniers, and a flowered hat. Her eyes were china-blue, and the long curls that fell over her white neck were yellow and glistening. She was about half a foot high. Her head was turned coquettishly on one side. (I imagine she must have been looking for the court gentleman who should have occupied the other end of the mantelpiece.) She held

in her hand a long, white staff adorned with a bunch of parti-colored ribbons. The few times that I had been admitted, on sufferance, to Mrs. Squire's apartment, I had gloated upon that lovely being with the eyes of a possible possessor. For had not Beller in a never-to-be-forgotten exuberant moment declared her intention of bestowing her China Lady upon the one she loved the best! She added that she "did n't want the old thing, anyhow." This might have been a delicate way of putting that one at ease.

I felt justified, therefore, in regarding the envied object as almost my own. I was further fortified in this belief by Beller's own conduct. She threw out from time to time dark hints as to her intentions, such as "When you get my China Lady, you'll be glad you've give me them may-pops you've got hid in the summer-house," or "I think my China Lady's worth ever' single one of your jinted dolls," or "My China Lady's gooder 'n your doll-quilt." All my small belongings had thus passed into Beller's pos-

session. In the case of the Blue Jug alone I had been able to resist her blandishments and the tempting hope held out to me in visible shape. This gives me the comforting assurance that I would not have bartered my immortal soul for the China Lady.

One day — it was the very next day after my fatal call on Mrs. Squire, which, by the way, was without dire consequences, much to the disappointment of that lady. My mother was a very sensible woman, and an understanding one! — Beller and I were hunting eggs in the corn-house. I had just sat down plump into an unseen nest, and was scraping the result off my dress with a corn-cob. Beller, immaculate as usual in the midst of a dusty chaos, confided to me that she was going to give a party the next day. I was rapturous, — in the first place at thus being taken into Beller's plans ; in the second place, I foresaw that the China Lady would be brought out of the holy of holies from which I was forever barred. Perhaps — I shivered with delight at the mere thought! — perhaps

I might be allowed to hold her in my hands ! I threw down the corn-cob and worshiped at Beller's feet. " Oh Beller, you 're so good ! And so be-yu-ti-ful ! " I breathed. But Beller was already banging down the ladder to see Sarah Bulger, who had come over to spend the day.

Now I submit that it was not unnatural for Jaconetta to take it for granted that Beller's party was also *her* party ; that, in point of fact, to any party at Good Cheer, she, Jaconetta, had a right to bid any guest she chose. Be this as it may, that afternoon, when her mother drove over to the village, Jaconetta did, upon arriving at the Barclays', invite not only the ten Barclays to come to Beller's party, but also other ten children, both big and little, who were playing in the Barclay yard !

It would appear that neither my mother nor Mrs. Squire was informed of the proposed festivity. On my own part this must have been pure heedlessness only, for I was ever sure of her instant sympathy and ready coöperation.

The next afternoon, prompt upon the hour,



which was an early one, — like Jimmy Barclay upon a previous occasion, I had not yet emerged from the bath-tub, — arrived Sarah Bulger and three or four other girls, stiff and starched in their party clothes; then the Barclays, the girls in the Barclay carriage, the boys afoot; and by twos and threes, the other ten; and Johnny, uninvited; all bashful but beaming. Beller, whose mother was taking her afternoon nap, received her own *invitees* in the front yard with becoming smiles; she scowled upon the others.

“Who asked you to come to my party?” she demanded brutally of Sissy Knox and Mary-Lou Parsons, standing red with misery before her. “Or you? Who asked *you*?” she added, whirling upon poor whity-brown Johnny. “Go home. I don’t want you.”

“Oh, Beller!” I cried, rushing down the steps, the ends of my untied sash trailing, my black mammy within shrieking after me. “Ain’t you ’shamed of yourself! *I* asked ’em. *I* did. Don’t cry, Mary-Lou. Beller don’t mean it.”

“Yes, I do mean it, Missy,” retorted Beller, turning angrily upon me. “What business ’d you have askin’ people to my party? It ’s my party.”

“Why, Beller!” I exclaimed, truly bewildered, “ain’t your party my party? Ain’t” —

“No, ’t aint!” yelled Beller, stamping her foot. A hubbub almost as dire as that which preceded my own exit from the Dutch-Doll party arose on the instant. In the midst of it, my brother Tom arrived on the scene, leaping the rose-garden hedge, and running up hatless.

“What ’s the fuss?” he roared. When told, he glared at Beller, and Beller glared back at him. “I reckon this plantation don’t *all* belong to you, Miss Beller Grey,” he finally remarked with fine sarcasm. “You can take your old party to the other side of the yard yonder. My sister is goin’ to have *her* party right here. Right adzackly here.”

He folded his arms in a most lordly way. He was very handsome and determined, my brother Tom. Beller quailed before him, and

walked without a word to the indicated spot, her guests trailing after her. "Now then, Sis," the autocrat continued, "you just call me if she bothers you any more." He re-leaped the hedge and loped back to his own hunting-grounds. The intruders, with child-like promptness to forget injuries, immediately scattered over the yard, laughing and chattering. But I was too deeply wounded for such immediate transition. I ran into the house to my mother, who, among the books in the library, had heard nothing. I sobbed out my story on her bosom. I can still see the little smile which played about the corners of her mouth while she listened. She soothed me into quiet and led me back into the yard, charging me to stay with my own particular "party." Then she retired to the kitchen to give orders for cake and syllabub for both factions.

I did stay on my own side of the yard, though I cast many and longing glances over to where Beller and her friends walked arm in arm over the grass. When at last my

guests went home, or were fetched away by their nurses, I could see that Beller and Sarah Bulger were left alone under the great oaks, which threw out long shadows under the setting sun. I longed to go over. I had quite forgiven Beller. Nay, more, I desired to throw myself on my knees before her and implore pardon for my own misdeeds. But I dared not. I slipped into the summer-house, and waited. Presently Mr. Bulger stopped at the gate in his buggy, and shouted for Sarah. Peeping through the leafy screen of jessamine, I saw Sarah Bulger kiss Beller; then she came running past the summer-house. She held something clasped in her arms. I saw it plainly as she flashed past my hiding-place. It was the China Lady.

## XIII

MR. WOOLEY

FATE, having at a single blow bereft Jaco-  
netta both of Beller and the China Lady, that  
young lady's too susceptible heart remained  
for a ( short ) time untenanted.

The squire, Mrs. Squire, and Beller entered  
their state coach one morning and departed  
for their own place. Nobody minded the  
squire ; he was fussily inoffensive. But even  
my mother I am sure drew a sigh of relief  
when Mrs. Squire took her high nose and  
her higher temper away from Good Cheer.  
Mr. Shackelford openly rejoiced ; and good  
Doctor Erasmus Whitthorne, who had been  
crushed to the earth by Mrs. Squire's scorn,  
hobnobbed with his Calvinistic enemy over an  
extra jorum of mint-julep. As for Beller —  
my brother Tom had what he called a “ wig-

warming" in honor of Beller's departure. This consisted of a war-dance executed according to my brother Tom's ideas, in Uncle Zan's dooryard. He himself participated, with Hart, Charley, the twins, Mandy and Dandy, beating the ground with their clubs and uttering wild whoops indicative of savage joy. Little did my brother Tom dream of the time to come when he would grovel at Beller's feet, writhe under Beller's enigmatic smile, bloom into idiocy as Beller's affianced!

Beller's successor, for of course there was in due time a successor, was Mr. Wooley.

Mr. Wooley was a young preacher. I do not know of what denomination. I know that both Mr. Shackelford the Calvinist and Doctor Erasmus Whitthorne, churchman, regarded him with ill-concealed contempt. He may have been an Adventist, or a Donatist. He called himself a sojourner. He preached several times in the town; and I seem to remember that these services were held in the court-house, which would rather imply unorthodoxy. He was young and tall, thin, and abnormally serious.



I followed Mr. Wooley about, fascinated from the first by a sense of something mysterious surrounding him like an aura. This mystic something had to do, I fancied, with the long cloak which he habitually wore. I likened this cloak to Elijah's mantle ; and I would not have been surprised at any moment to see its wearer caught up into a chariot of fire and carried to Heaven. The Sojourner must truly have been a simple and fervent soul, albeit a voluble and a wearisome. He certainly had a most thrilling voice ; I used to stand quivering with emotion outside his door listening, while he walked up and down within chanting (he never sang) "How tedious and tasteless the hours," or "On Jordan's stormy banks." When in long-drawn sonorous syllables he described those sweet fields beyond the swelling flood, which "stand dressed in living green," I saw those heavenly meadows with my bodily eyes, and yearned towards Canaan with a spiritual ecstasy which I would now give worlds to feel. Hymn upon hymn heard in this surreptitious way impressed itself upon my

memory, never to be forgotten. To this day the whole range of devotional songs familiar to an earlier generation stand out line after line in my mind, each conveying its own vivid picture of joy or grief, despair or exultation, graven there by the wonderful power of the Sojourner. Only last summer, in a big little town where I chanced to go on a Sunday to church, when an ancient preacher—dropped from heaven knows what old-fashioned wilderness—sitting in the pulpit lifted his voice and with resonant tongue and closed eyes sang “Coronation” from beginning to end, I at the other extremity of the church joined in without book and boldly saw him clear through. It is true that I thought the congregation would assist; and true when the congregation tittered I felt my face burn. But that is beside the point.

I do not think Mr. Wooley ever noticed me. I had an ardent secret desire to ask Mr. Wooley to christen me and thus take away my reproach among men. But I never could screw my courage up to this point. I doubt if

he ever saw me, though his dim spectacled eyes often rested upon me until I felt the very bottom of my soul pierced through and through like a sieve. I sat entranced while he talked to whomsoever would listen — generally my mother, all others escaping upon various pretexts — concerning the efficacy of prayer. I believed devoutly when he declared that the Ear of God was at the mouth of every man, woman, and child in the universe; and I shuddered at the bigness of that Ear, and stood appalled at the thought of adding it to the vast and awful Eye of God which I knew was forever upon me.

Much comforted however by the knowledge that I had only to ask in order to receive, I began to cast about in my own mind as to what I most wanted. Only the terror of speaking directly with that Divine Ear kept me from rashly requesting the return of the China Lady, or from beseeching that old Ceas', the dog who had guarded my babyhood in a manner only less conceivable than Gelert had protected Llewellyn's son, should instantly be restored

to life from the heap of bones in a certain fence-corner. Pondering deeply and biding my time, I continued to listen to Mr. Wooley's exhortations.

Meanwhile, Mandy, who, as already hinted, was fiercely jealous of the successive objects of Jaconetta's affections, had in this instance, as it were, thrown up the sponge. She too yielded to Mr. Wooley's spell. She hung with me about his chamber-door, listening to his weird recitatives. Crouched on her yellow heels behind me in the library, with her yellow eyes fixed upon his face, she drank in his solemn and picturesque utterances. They carried her farther than they did me. For whereas I stopped with the knowledge of the willing Ear, and considered only what worldly profit I might derive therefrom, Mandy, the first thing anybody knew, was mo'nin'.

One who has never seen a negro "mourn" his sins, can have no conception of the state of his mind — and body — at such a time. When brought to his knees — generally by some castigation direct and denunciatory from

the pulpit — he immediately ceases to work; and refusing all human comfort or consolation, sits moping day in and day out with his head in his hands, his big melancholy eyes streaming with tears, uttering from time to time sepulchral groans which cause his fellows to remark, “He’s mo’nin’, bless Gawd, he’s mo’nin’ *hard*. Lawd fetch him th’oo!” He becomes untidy in proportion as he has heretofore been the dandy of the Quarters. If he comes th’oo an’ gits glory, as may happen in the course of events, he arises, shakes himself, and returns fresh and cheerful to his duties until such time as he may shout out his “’sperunce” in church, and receive from the brethren the right hand of fellowship. If, as rarely occurs, he is so sin-struck that he cannot come through, a moment dawns when he abruptly ceases to mourn and becomes normal and natural once more.

All these symptoms Mandy had in just measure under the unconscious ministrations of Mr. Wooley. She left one brass andiron in the parlor unbrightened, the hearth in the

nursery unreddened, her knitting at sixes and sevens on the library floor. These, with the exception of her attendance on myself, were about her only duties. And she planted herself on a stump in the kitchen-garden and sat there listless, sad, and despairing — a seven-year-old female Saint Simeon Stylites — morning, noon and night, day after day, until I longed to lay violent hands on her. But my mother, who always respected this form of madness among our negroes, forbade me to trouble her.

I had therefore to work out the problem of my desires alone. I had not decided between the Cup of King Jamschid, the resurrection of old Ceas', the China Lady, and a baby sister, when the Episode of the Parasol drove me to immediate action.



## XIV

### THE SUNSHADE

I BORROWED my mother's sunshade. Or to speak more correctly, I saw the sunshade lying on a table in the front hall. I looked around furtively to see if my mother were anywhere about, and finding myself quite unobserved, I grasped the long-coveted object and stole as noiselessly as possible out by the back way. I pretended to myself to believe that my mother would be pleased to know that her parasol — a dainty affair of silk and lace — with a grotesque ivory head on the jointed handle — was serving the double purpose of keeping the sun out of Jaconetta's eyes and of affording Jaconetta an opportunity to flaunt herself gloriously past Mandy sitting on her penitential stump.

There was in truth no sun to speak of.

The soft November sky was covered with fleecy clouds; a blue haze like the veil of Salammbo hung in the tree-tops. The little gusts of warm wind which came up from the Gulf loosened the yellowing leaves of the catalpas, and the nuts on the lofty pecan-trees; the ones drifting gently to the ground, the others dropping with a sharp rattle. I passed along the banana-walk, the great leaves whispering above my head. Beyond, in the rose-garden, I heard my mother's voice; she was transplanting violets and crooning softly to herself an old Scotch song. I stooped, running under the lee of the rose-hedge, so that she could not see me — and the borrowed sunshade! and held on my way to the sugar-house.

The sugar-house stood on slightly rising ground back of the negro quarters. Its single gigantic chimney was pouring forth a billowy volume of black smoke; all the air was sweet with the smell of boiling cane-juice. High-wheeled plantation-wagons were bringing in cane and clattering back empty to the fields; there was a clinking of hammers in the shop

where Cicero was superintending the making of sugar-barrels. A hoarse roar of voices arose from the shed, where four or five half-naked black giants were shoveling coal and feeding the engines. I suppose I hardly noticed at the time all these familiar details. They rise up before me now, vivid against the background of my lost youth.

I was unused to going about alone, and I felt an unaccustomed timidity. This was dispelled by a welcoming shout from the feeders tending the carrier. "Hi! Yi! Heah comes l'il Missy. Now we gwine ter ha' good luck!" cried Big Aaron, pausing with his arms full of cane glistening red and yellow and pale green in the wan sunlight. "Howdy, honey. Jes' cut yo' eye over yunder todes de cane-fiel' an' keep off de fros'." He threw the cane into the carrier and swung me to his shoulder. I swelled with pride and importance, clinging to his black head. There was a momentary cessation of labor. My father appeared in an upper window of the sugar-house to inquire into the uproar. Seeing me, he waved his

hand in affectionate greeting and disappeared. "Whar's Mandy?" asked Aaron at length, looking frowningly around. "Whar's dat kinky-haid imp o' Satan?" Mandy was his own daughter. "What she mean by leffin' de li'l Miss meyander 'roun' by herse'f dis hyer way? An whar," he added wrathfully, "whar is Judy?" Judy was my black mammy and Aaron's wife. "Ain't Judy got no sense! She gwine ter lef li'l Miss run her haid inter a rattlesnake nes' one o' dese days!" And in spite of my remonstrances he marched indignantly up the lane, through the quarters, and into the kitchen-yard, where he sat me down. "Run erlong to de house, honey-chile," he said in a coaxing tone, "dat's a good li'l gal. You sho' get hutted over yunder; jes wait until I lay my han' on Mandy, mo'nin or no mo'nin."

He went back to the sugar-house. I passed on, making a wide detour in order to sniff at Mandy on her stump.

But Mandy was no longer on her stump. She had come through, and in the first excite-

ment of her salvation, she was whooping about the kitchen and the wood-house, an object of profound admiration to all the house-servants. I was momentarily envious ; then sincerely glad — for reasons too complex to be set down in brief. I ran across the back yard. Suddenly I stopped, my heart caught as it were in the cold grip of terror. Where was my mother's sunshade ? I looked at my empty hand with a sort of paralyzed despair. I tried to remember what I had done with that sunshade. Where had I had it last ? I sat down weakly on the ground, with a miserable buzzing in my ears, a desperate fluttering in my throat. What did I do with that sunshade ? All at once, like a flash of lightining, I saw it in the cane-carrier where it had dropped from my hands when Big Aaron threw me to his shoulder. In that moment of vainglory I had not noted it ; now I beheld it, a little patch of rose-color among the cane, traveling slowly up the slant to the remorseless pans of the crushers, to destruction, to annihilation ! I buried my face in my hands and rocked myself to

and fro, too wretched even to cry. My mother's pretty parasol that father gave her on her birthday! How, oh how, could I ever tell her! How —

Jaconetta straightened herself, then sprang to her feet, the light of sudden inspiration chasing the gray shadows from her small face. The Ear! The Willing Ear!

She bounded into the house and entered the parlor, closing the door gently behind her. For a second she stood a-tremble before the thought of what she was about to do. She shivered before the audacity of opening her lips to that great listening Ear. But there was no time to lose. She fell upon her knees on the hard bright floor. "O God," she breathed in awestruck whispers, "I've lost mother's silk sunshade. (I don't *need* to tell Him, for of course He knows!) And I want to find it. Right now. Oh, God, please let me find mother's parasol behind the trunk in the nursery." Having thus briefly proffered my request, I jumped up and ran as fast as my legs would carry me to the nursery, to get my



mother's pink sunshade from behind the trunk. For of course it would be there. I was assailed by no doubts during my short flight. I felt buoyant as air. I even saw myself — alas, Jaconetta! — putting the sunshade back on the table in the hall and saying never a word to any living soul.

I tiptoed across the nursery to the place designated for the miracle. I stooped over the little hair trunk and looked. I rubbed my eyes and looked again. Then the awful truth dawned upon me. *The sunshade was not there.* The Ear had been deaf to my cry. There was no Ear! No anything! I have indeed known in all my life few moments as poignant of indignant misery as the one I am now describing.

As I turned slowly away — the pink parasol forgotten in the blankness of my spiritual disappointment — I heard from the library, where he was striding back and forth in his customary way, the young preacher chanting an exultant canticle:

“Sickness and sorrow, pain and death  
Are felt and feared no more.”

And I turned, metaphorically, upon the Sojourner and rent him in pieces.

Mr. Wooley left Good Cheer that same day. He departed as serenely unconscious of his violent ejection from Jaconetta's heart as he had been of his sudden enthronement therein. Not long afterward he proclaimed himself a Prophet of the Most High, and went about laying hands on the sick to heal them. He died, still young, in a madhouse, aweing to the last moment his physicians and keepers by the mysterious power of his voice, which broke out with his latest breath into the triumphant shout,

"O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!"

Happy Sojourner! Poor Jaconetta!

## XV

### THADDEUS OF WARSAW

THE curtain next rises upon Jaconetta seated in a peach-tree, hidden from all the world by its wealth of wind-blown leaves, and reading — what but “Thaddeus of Warsaw” ! For she had now almost attained the mature age of eight years, and by dint of much labor on the part of Doctor Erasmus Whitthorne, and by reason of sundry prizes, offered by her father and mother, she had learned to read indifferently well. True, she skipped the long words, and strangely mispronounced many of the commonest. To this period of her development belongs the story of Stephen Mised, which she gulped down from McGuffey’s Reader, calling it to herself “Stephen Mizzled,” and speculating deeply and often as to how or what Stephen did mizzle. But according to

the habit of children of her kind she sought no information on the subject.

“Thaddeus” belonged to my brother Tom, now a strapping lad of fifteen. I had borrowed it in much the same fashion as I had borrowed my mother’s sunshade. And novels of all kinds being as yet for me under the ban, I had sought the leafy hiding-place of my favorite peach-tree, and there proceeded to follow with thumping heart and blundering sense the fortunes and misfortunes of the beautiful dark-eyed Pole.

“Miss Ma’y! Miss Ma’y!” Mandy’s voice came to me borne on the June breeze, “Mis’ Sybil say come to de gret-house. Comp’ny done come.” I read on. “Miss Ma’y! Miss Ma’y!” The voice drew nearer: “Mis’ Sybil say come to de gret-house. Comp’ny done come.”

I continued to spell out laboriously the thrilling syllables. What did I care about comp’ny when Thaddeus —

“Miss Ma’y!” Mandy now stood looking directly up at me from the foot of the peach-

tree. "Mis' Sybil say come to de gret-house; comp'ny's done come."

"Who's come?" I condescended to inquire.

"Yo' cousin Miss Jane-Ann Crutchfield. She come in her cay'age, an' fotch her trunk an' dat pizen yaller gal Jinny, o' hern. Jinny des flantin' herse'f 'bout de comp'ny wing o' we-all's gret-house. Look lak dey gwine ter stay a mont'."

"Oh," I returned indifferently. And I went back to Thaddeus.

"Marse Pete Driver," continued Mandy, "done rid over long-side Miss Jane-Ann's cay'age."

I closed Thaddeus with a snap and slid down from my perch.

Six months at least had elapsed since the exit of Mr. Wooley, and Jaconetta's heart was once more swept and garnished. There had been occasional haltings, as it were, just outside its threshold, as for instance the wonderful Bareback Lady Rider.

Why pause to describe the rapture which

snatched me up by the hair of my head and bore me, even as the Prophet of Islam was borne into a Paradise unutterable, when I sat for the first time under the patched dome of a circus tent? Lives there a man with soul so dead as never to have thrilled and palpitated and wept for pure joy of the clown in his wide breeches and pointed hat, his painted smile and his raucous voice! Does not an echo sweet as "the horns of elf-land faintly blowing" stir the heart of every normal human being at the recollection of the grand entry with its gayly caparisoned steeds and their glittering riders! the chariots and the drivers thereof, the swaying elephants, and the hideously beautiful camels! And who has not succumbed at the first sight of the radiant spangled Bareback Lady Rider! My own innermost being was even as the paper-covered hoop through which she sprang as she careered around the ring on her lumbering padded gray horse; there was nothing left of it except the outer encircling rim!

I worshiped one whole night at that Bare-



back Lady Rider's shrine. At least I imagined that I had waked and worshiped all night. It may have been — in fact I now feel certain that it could have been — but a paltry half-hour or so. Jaconetta was ever known for a sleepy-head.

The next morning there was a tremendous uproar in the direction of the stable-lot. Everybody ran out of the breakfast-room to see what was the matter. "Lawd, Marse John," panted Jerry, his black face ashen with terror, "in de name o' Gawd what we gwine ter do? Dat ongawdly circus el'phunt done broke a-loose on ou' paster. He done eat up two o' ou' hay-stacks. He des settin' in on a'ner. 'Pear lak he ain' gwine ter leave feed enough on de place fer a bull-calf."

It was true. An exciting forenoon followed, throughout which threats and dissimulation proved equally unavailing; the great beast was recaptured only when the other two elephants belonging to the show were driven into the pasture. To their blandishments he surrendered and lumbered slowly

back to the circus tent, leering at his keeper with his wicked little eyes and lifting menacing tusks at his too-near approach. A crowd of people — men, women, and children, nearly everybody, in truth, from the neighborhood, and even from the village — followed him at a respectful distance. Bringing up the rear were a number of the circus people. Among these my horrified eyes noted a sallow, unkempt beldam with one child astraddle of her hip and another at her heels.

It was the Bareback Lady Rider! Jaco-  
netta's incipient romance was nipped in the  
bud.

Then there was Colonel Dick Washin'ton. Colonel Washin'ton was kin to the Barclays, and came, I think, from Virginia, to visit them. He was a tall, blond-haired bachelor, with mild blue eyes and the voice of a ring-dove. He had the manners of a Chesterfield, looking, according to common report, as if butter would n't melt in his mouth. In reality he was a reckless, swearing, fox-hunting, julep-drinking sinner. But finding him

out only served, in certain cases at least, to enhance his charms. In less than a month after his advent among us he ran away with Cousin Lucinda Crutchfield, and married her under her father's very nose, that choleric old squire roaring during the ceremony behind the barred door of the church. Colonel Dick afterward fought a bloody duel with Cousin Lucinda's former betrothed; then settled down into the tamest and most exemplary of husbands. It was his tameness and not his connubial venture which made him ineligible to that swept and garnished apartment in Jaconetta's bosom.

The Crutchfield girls, by the way, were a wilful set and a winsome. There were, or there had been before Colonel Washin'ton's raid on Black Towers, seven of them, all grown to womanhood, and all beautiful. They were kinswomen of my mother's, and they sometimes came to Good Cheer in a body; driving over from Black Towers, some twenty miles distant, in two solemn-looking carriages, with an attendant cart filled with luggage. At

such times there was the devil to pay at Good Cheer. Such daring and hitherto unheard-of pranks ! Such lawless overriding of all custom and precedent ; such disregard of authority ; such swishing of audacious skirts about the halls, such clattering of mischievous slippers up and down the stairs ; such wild bubblings of laughter, such untimely bursts of song ; such a shaking-up, in short, of the house from roof to foundation !

And I do not suppose they could help being outrageous flirts any more than they could help being adorably pretty, with their black hair and blue eyes, their low white foreheads and lips that were redder than roses, and their tall, slim figures, that were lithe and graceful as long-stemmed lilies.

There were no more worlds left for the Crutchfield girls to conquer at Good Cheer and its environ. Every unmarried male from sixteen years old and upwards in all the region round about had proposed to one or another of them — some had proposed to and been rejected by the whole seven in turn.

Mr. Shackelford had so far lost his (bald) head as to lay his heart at Maria's feet ; Doctor Erasmus Whitthorne had written tender verses to Sally-Caroline. My brother Tom, at the very moment of which I am writing, was madly in love with Jane-Ann. (I thought he was "mourning.")

Jane-Ann was the youngest of the Crutchfield girls, and the most "torn-down." She left a lurid streak behind her throughout the length and breadth of half a dozen parishes, when she condescended, by way of a ladder, into the estate of matrimony. Jane-Ann it was who danced a fling one midnight on our supper-table, in and out among tea-cups, bowls, plates, and goblets, without breaking a piece of that egg-shell and cut-glass so dear to my mother's heart. The guests were highly edified by this performance ; my mother wept, and the hair of my father's head stood on end !

Jane-Ann — to come back to myself, Thaddeus, and Mist' Pete Driver — was sitting demurely quiescent on the gallery steps when I

reached the house that June day. From the step below her my brother Tom glared at Mr. Pete Driver, who, seated a step above her, leaned over her and fanned her with his panama hat.

“You untidy little monkey! What have you been up to, now!” This was her greeting to me. I stopped, suddenly aware of my torn and soiled garments, and went scarlet to the roots of my hair. But Mr. Driver ran down the steps, and taking me by the hand led me with a gallant air to Cousin Jane-Ann’s knee. “Just like Thaddeus!” I breathed rapturously to myself. And the Apartment had again found a tenant.



## XVI

### THE PERFIDY OF PETER

MR. PETER DRIVER was one of our neighbors. He was not numbered among the gentry of the parish, having no ancestors to speak of. He owned a small farm, which, with the help of his paltry half-a-dozen negroes, he "ran" in person. Plebeian though he was, he was amazingly good-looking, broad-shouldered, swarthy, black-eyed, and masterful and dashing enough to suit even the somewhat jaded taste of the Crutchfield girls. It was one of this harum-scarum crew, in fact, who had picked him up and introduced him into the charmed circle of the parish families. The will of Melissa Crutchfield was law wherever she went; and since Melissa decreed that Pete Driver was good enough to associate with his born betters, he

was at once accepted by them. Nor was he relegated to his original obscurity when Melissa, having found a fresher victim, dropped him. He was a capital fellow, was Pete, and he had quickly made friends in the sacred sphere into which he had ascended. Moreover Nancy Crutchfield had turned her dark-blue eyes tenderly upon him. And Nancy's will was also law wherever *she* went.

It was nothing to Jaconetta that Mr. Driver was known to be Nancy Crutchfield's abject slave, as he had been Melissa's. Jaconetta was one of those heedless butterfly souls which revel in the sunshine of the present moment, taking no heed of to-morrow and its possible — or its probable — storms. Jaconetta, her contemporaries were wont to observe with some pity and more contempt, could never see an inch beyond her own nose.

Cousin Jane-Ann had come to spend a few days with dear Cousin Sybil, my mother. Dear Cousin Sybil, though really very fond of her pretty young kinswoman, lived in con-

stant terror, I now know, of what that tempestuous youngest Crutchfield might conceive in her brain and execute with her hands — or her tiny arched feet. Contrary to expectation and to precedent, Jane-Ann behaved with almost appalling decorum. She rode about with Cousin John, my father, listening in flattering silence to his agricultural dissertations; she followed my mother into the still-room, and took lessons in the making of ointments and cordials; she sat with rapt eyes fixed upon Doctor Erasmus Whitthorne's face while he read to her the plays of Æschylus — in the original Greek. She was, to sum up, so changed that to the younger boys, and to Mandy and myself, she ceased to be interesting. "She got some devilment in her haid," remarked my black mammy, ominously. But this theory was scouted at by all concerned.

Mr. Driver, who rode over every day, seemed, I thought, unaffected by the transformation — or by her presence. His attentions indeed were addressed mainly to myself.

(He had, by the way, just received his dismissal from Nancy Crutchfield.) He sat with me — and Jane-Ann — in the summer-house, or walked with me — and Jane-Ann — up and down the shady aisles of the orange-grove. It was with me at such time that he discoursed, listening gravely to my criticisms of that heartless world into which Thaddeus the tearful fell, as a lamb among wolves, or giving me the result of his own observation of people and things. I must confess that he stuffed my plastic mind with much which proved to be trivial or even misleading. For example, apropos of the tarpaulins which covered some barrels in the sugar-house, he informed me that tarpaulin was made of the ears of elephants, and such is the lasting impress made upon the young and receptive mind by any serious statement, that to this day I involuntarily associate all tarpaulin with the great flapping ears of that circus elephant who well-nigh ate us out of house and home ! Mr. Driver also gave me to understand — and this in the very presence of Cousin Jane-



IN THE SUMMER-HOUSE





Ann — that all people who had black hair and blue eyes were afflicted with a kind of evil eye, which on occasion was fatal to those who fell under its spell. I shudder even yet when I behold that loveliest of Beauty's combinations. It did not occur to me that Jane-Ann belonged to this type, never having troubled myself to remark the color of her long-lashed orbs.

One morning when I came out from my lessons in the library, Jane-Ann was missing from the summer-house, where she was wont to await me. Mr. Driver, whose horse had been stabled just after breakfast, had also disappeared. My brother Tom was even more concerned than I was. He looked in the parlor, where Jane-Ann had spent the preceding morning showing Mr. Driver my Blue China Jug; and in the grape-arbor, whither the morning before that she had lured him to gather scuppernongs for jelly. There was not in either place the slightest trace of the vanished pair. "Where *can* Cousin Jane-Ann *be*?" exclaimed my brother Tom, standing under

the scuppernong arbor, the picture of gloomy despair. I wondered why he should be so anxious to see Jane-Ann, whom he had seen at breakfast but a few hours before! I did not care where Jane-Ann had gone. But I did yearn after the broad-shouldered, swarthy plebeian who had disappeared with her. Luckily at this moment Mandy ran up with the information volunteered by Uncle Jake that Miss Crutchfield and Mr. Driver had gone blackberrying over by the west field. "Mist' Pete was totin' of a tin bucket," Uncle Jake said on being questioned, "an' Miss Jane-Ann had on Mis' Sybil's gyarden gloves, an' Mis' Sybil's gyarden hat. Miss Jane-Ann look' kinder cur'us out'n her lef' eye," he added.

My brother Tom set off running toward the west field. I ran after him down the dusty road, bare-headed and bare-armed in my low-necked jaconet slip. At the first turn, my brother Tom looked at me over his shoulder and invited me to go back. I disregarded the invitation, and very soon I was at his elbow, for I was, as already recorded, long of limb

and fleet of foot. We swept on, neck and neck; from time to time he remarked in savage undertones that girls were squeaky, and when we reached the log spanning the spring-branch and I fell perforce to the rear he whirled about unexpectedly and shoved me into the shallow stream. I rose unhurt; but by the time I had scrambled out, sputtering and dripping, he was far ahead. I pursued him, burning indignation added to my desire to track Mr. Driver to the blackberry patch. Again I was almost at my fellow-runner's elbow, when he suddenly swerved aside, ducked, and dropped behind a clump of sumac bushes. Instinctively I followed his example; and huddling against him breathlessly silent, I looked forth from the leafy shelter and saw what I saw.

Cousin Jane-Ann was sitting on a fallen log, the tin bucket quite empty of blackberries at her feet. Mr. Driver, sitting beside her and much closer than possible rattlesnakes would seem to warrant, had apparently just reached a most interesting point in his discourse. "You have treated me shamefully, Miss Jane-

Ann," he was saying hotly; "you have led me on and on, and made me believe" —

"O Mister D-r-r-iver!" Jane-Ann had a slight impediment in her speech which her adorers thought inimitable. "What an i-d-d-dea! I thought it was M-M-Melissa you wanted! Or L-L-Lucinda! Or Sa-l-l-ly-Caroline!" she added with a slight upward toss of her head.

"I never did care for anybody but you," declared Mr. Driver boldly, if somewhat mendaciously, for his attentions to these young ladies had been marked. "I adore you, Miss Jane-Ann," he went on. (My brother Tom jogged me in the ribs with his elbow so that I gave vent to a suppressed shriek; fortunately it was lost in the sputterings of Mr. Driver's ardor.) "I worship you, Miss Jane-Ann." Down he went plump on his knees in the soft grass. "By heaven, you are the most beautiful and the most delightful creature the world ever saw. If you will marry me you will see what a devoted husband I will make you." He had seized Cousin Jane-Ann's hand and

was kissing it through mother's garden-glove. I could hear my brother Tom's heart thumping away like a trip-hammer, and I know he could hear mine.

"I cannot m-m-marry you, Mr. Driver," murmured Jane-Ann, mournfully; "I shall never m-m-marry. I shall remain single all my l-l-life. But I shall r-r-regard you as one of my b-b-b-best friends." She rose to her feet.

"Nay," cried Mr. Pete, still on his knees, and quite in the manner of Thaddeus himself, "that is much indeed, but —"

"I shall never m-m-marry," repeated Miss Crutchfield with a deep-drawn sigh.

My brother Tom dragged me from the sumac thicket, and rushed me back along the road. I did not mind; I had heard quite enough. I hated Mr. Driver for his duplicity. I hated Jane-Ann for her cruelty to Mr. Driver. But my brother Tom was exultant. "Cousin Jane-Ann 'll never marry," he cried as we trotted along, "until —" I now know what he thought. And in his exultation he

helped me, who needed no help, across the foot-log at the spring branch.

That night Jane-Ann eloped with the widower (who had five children) forbidden by Squire Crutchfield to speak to her or to enter his house. A ladder placed against Jane-Ann's bedroom window, and the inevitable note on her pincushion, told the tale.



## XVII

### LORD RONALD MACDONALD

HARD upon the egress of Mr. Pete Driver from Jaconetta's heart, came the advent thereinto of Lord Ronald Macdonald. And this, I hasten to observe, lest the reader's patience be overtaxed, is the last of Jaconetta's loves to be here recorded.

My brother Tom, after Jane-Ann's treachery (Jane-Ann had solemnly sworn to him also that she would never marry — at least not until he himself was of an age to conduct her to the altar) — after this unexpected blow he "broke loose." Never very tractable, he became wholly unruly and disobedient, defying Doctor Erasmus Whitthorne to his face, refusing to conjugate his verbs, either Latin or English; and setting at naught even the authority of my father, over-riding my

mother's orders, nagging the younger children, bullying the servants. One fine morning, therefore, much to his own amazement and indignation, Master Tom was packed off to the Swallow School—an institution of learning some half a day's journey by stage from Good Cheer, conducted by one Doctor Swallow.

Doctor Swallow was reputed to be very severe upon the young gentlemen unfortunate enough to be placed in his charge. And there was a general understanding that none but very refractory young gentlemen were ever placed at Swallow's. I shall never forget the white face my brother Tom turned toward my mother's bedroom windows as he was driven away. At one appeal on his part I am sure those closed shutters would have been thrown open and his sentence of exile revoked. For behind them father and mother were stationed. But he set his lips firmly together, folded his arms, and jerked up his head proudly. The buggy traveled slowly along the carriage-drive to the gate, turned

into the road, and swung away. We children ran after it, shouting and weeping. It was monstrous that our leader should be sent away! In a secret conclave held in the summer-house we decided to call our parents to account. But at dinner no one dared to lift an eye from his plate. Such a silence hung over the table as had not fallen there since the day the One-Wheel Sulky Man met his fatal defeat. A glance at the empty seat beside my father brought a sob into everybody's throat; even Doctor Erasmus Whitthorne, who had suffered most at his hands, would, I think, gladly have had the culprit back.

As for my mother, the absence of her first-born was more than she could bear. With the passing of the days she drooped like a flower needing sunshine or rain; her face grew pale and drawn; she spent the mornings watching for the coming of the stage which passed Good Cheer on the way to Swallow's, and the afternoons straining her eyes for its return. Heaven knows what messages and letters, what trifles and trinkets,

what boxes of goodies she intrusted to Jim Bowes, the red-faced stage-driver ! An occasional boyish scrawl only came back to her, though Doctor Swallow wrote profusely and pompously of the boy's improvement and content. I often wonder, remembering this agony of separation, how she lived through the four terrible years of the Civil War, with her husband and two of her young sons away to the front ! True, she had to "run" the plantation. True, also, that as soon as the strain was over, she died !

At length, just before Christmas, — it had been decreed by Doctor Swallow that none of his pupils should go home for Christmas, — she took to her bed.

"Marse John," said my black-mammy, with the privileged freedom of an old and trusted servant, "Mis' Sybil ain' sick. She wusser 'n sick. She *pinin'*. She *pinin'* fer li'l Marse Tom. Ef you don't fetch li'l Marster home, she gwine ter pine herse'f inter her coffin."

My father made no reply. He rose from the breakfast-table where he was sitting, and

walked out to the stable. There he ordered Dugald Dalgetty and Marcus to be harnessed to his buggy. Then he came into my mother's room, where I was torturing her with stories heard in the Quarters (where great indignation prevailed over Marse Tom's prolonged punishment) of the cruelties practiced upon his boys by Doctor Swallow. My father stooped and kissed her. "You must get dressed about sundown, Sybil," he said cheerfully, "I am going after him."

"*Oh, John!*" The rapture in her voice was almost terrifying. I burst into tears hearing it.

Father hurried out of the room. Quick as he was, however, when he reached the buggy he found me seated in it with Caleb, his body-servant. I suppose he was pretty well unmanned by that rapturous cry. Any way, he made no objection to my imperious demand to be taken along. And go I did; and much to my black-mammy's horror, in my every-day frock and run-down shoes.

Such a Tom as that was which came run-

ning across the playground — for it was noon when we got to Swallow's — and fell into my father's arms crying, but pretending not to, and uttering sobs of welcome, and broken prayers for forgiveness! Such a shadow of that sturdy, jaunty, swaggering Tom who had left Good Cheer a bare two months before! Such hollow, sunken cheeks, such shrinking shoulders, that seemed ever to expect a blow, such imploring eyes! “I should have horse-whipped Swallow on the spot!” growled Mr. Shackelford on hearing the story. “Horse-whip!” ejaculated the mild-mannered Doctor Erasmus Whitthorne, “why, damme, sir, hanging is too good for such a monster!”

There was, I know, a stormy scene in Doctor Swallow's study. During its progress I sat on a bench in the playground holding tight to my brother Tom's hand. (Strangely enough, he did not resent this open display of sisterly affection.) A number of meagre boys skulked about, alternately watching us and the study windows. One only came within reach of us, and he cantered away when my brother Tom



called out to him, "Hi, Ronald! Come here, I say. I'm goin' home, old fellow. I'm goin' home. My father's come for me."

When father descended the house steps, followed by Caleb carrying young Marster's trunk, my brother Tom ran after this boy and came dragging him back by main force. "Father," he cried, "here's Ronald. I call him Lord Ronald Macdonald — after mother's song, you know.

"'She has kilted her coats o' green satin,  
She has kilted them up to the knee,  
And she's off wi' Lord Ronald Macdonald  
His bride and his darlin' to be.'"

He half chanted, half sung the old ditty. "He's my chum. He has n't got anybody except his guardian. I'm going to take him to Good Cheer with me; eh, father?"

"Certainly, my son," — father laid a friendly hand on Ronald's shoulder, — "Dr. Swallow will not object, I am sure." He cast a significant glance at that portly, but much ruffled pedagogue in the doorway above. "And I will answer to his guardian. Come, Ronald, show Caleb your trunk."

Master Tom shoved his bewildered chum up the steps and into the hall. The upshot of it was that a little later, when the stage arrived, at its accustomed hour, and stopped at the gate, Ronald, my brother Tom, and I were handed into it, the trunks were hoisted into the boot; father in his buggy, with Caleb, fell behind, — we could see him from the rear window of the stage smiling at us through a cloud of dust all the way home.

It was the most wonderful thing that ever was, that ride home in the real stage. Nothing like it ever came into Jaconetta's life, before or since. We three were the only passengers; we bounced about on the roomy seats, holding on to the straps, while the great red body of the vehicle swung and swayed on its powerful springs. The road, for the most part, wound through the woods, where in the afternoon sunlight we could see the red and yellow gleam of sumac and dogwood leaves, and wandering paths strewn with brown pine-needles. Occasionally Jim Bowes would lash his four horses into a gallop, and then with a

rattle of harness and a wild mellow tooting of his long tin horn, we would clatter through the single street of some wee-bit town and draw up in front of the Store and Post Office, where all the villagers would be assembled to stare at us in friendly envy. It was a wonderful ride. The boys said nothing at all about the miseries they had endured at Swallow's, while the Doctor, after a manner peculiar to himself, was breaking their spirit; they seemed to have quite forgotten them. My brother Tom, who was very clever when he tried, told some fascinating yarns he had got out of a book at Swallow's, — one in particular related to a winged steed which came down from some high region of air and cloud, to drink out of a fountain, and was captured. Ronald said that the sound of our horses' feet on the road was like the thunder of cavalry. No, he had never seen any cavalry; but he meant to be a soldier and command a brigade or so of cavalry. He was full of wars and tales of combat. I was much taken, I remember, with his story of that bushel of gold thumb-rings picked up on the field after Hannibal's defeat.

Toward the end of our four hours' journey, my brother Tom fell silent; he hung out of the window, peering eagerly forward, as we began to pass along familiar lanes and skirt familiar fields. Once he turned to me and asked abruptly, "Is she much sick?"

"Oh, *no*, just pinin'," I answered. "He's thinking of mother," I added in a whisper to Ronald beside me.

Ronald, who was a red-headed, freckled-faced, stubby lad, about my brother Tom's age, nodded understandingly. "I have n't got any," he whispered back, after a pause.

With that Jaconetta's heart leaped to him in a burst of that mingled girlish and maternal passion which is woman's highest and holiest love. Like the Scotch lassie, Lizzie Lindsay, she would at that moment, if he had asked her, have —

"Kilted her coats of green satin, —  
Kilted them up to the knee,"

and been

"Off wi' Lord Ronald Macdonald,  
His bride and his darling to be."

## XVIII

### A BUGLE BLAST

LORD RONALD did not return to Swallow's. The consent of his bachelor uncle and guardian was easily obtained to his remaining at Good Cheer; and the next three or four months were the happiest of Jaconetta's life, as Ronald was the dearest of all her loves. The ballroom on the third floor was arranged as a schoolroom, and thither Doctor Erasmus Whitthorne transferred his Lares and Penates, i. e., his Johnson's Dictionary and his Greek and Latin poets, and proceeded to lead us, as before, along the thorny paths of learning, with this change only, that Lord Ronald Macdonald, Sarah Bulger, and seven of the ten Barclays were added to his band of youthful pilgrims.

There was excitement in the outer world.

Almost every day the leading men of the parish, buzzing with importance, gathered at our house. The stage, stopping at the gate from time to time, discharged strangers who stayed over night, and sat late at the dinner-table discussing something which they called The Situation, with my father. Father seemed preoccupied, — he went often from home; he wrote a great many letters, and held long and earnest consultations with my mother, whose judgment upon all subjects he respected.

But the approaching storm blew far above our heads; no premonition of evil affected the tranquillity of the schoolroom or the gayety of the playground.

In Doctor Erasmus Whitthorne's eyes we were doubtless a graceless and idle pack, — in the blue-backed speller we never reached that solid block of lines which begins with *Incomprehensibility*; we swayed back and forth in a line, shouting kindred but lesser mysteries, in the proud belief that we had attained the pinnacle of knowledge. Nor did we, in the Reader, progress much beyond my old friend



Stephen Mizzled. But we were brisk enough on the playground, and blatant enough at Friday speech-time.

Ronald was easily champion of all our games — quickest on the scent at Hi-spy, swiftest of foot in the race. Even I fared far in his rear at Miley-Bright, unless he generously lagged and allowed me to beat him to the goal. But when it came to Friday speeches, the noble lord might with truth have been set down as a dunce. He so stuttered and stammered and fidgeted and forgot, that Doctor Erasmus Whitthorne regularly admonished him from his arm-chair throne and as regularly threatened severe punishment which he never inflicted. None of us that I recollect ever learned anything fresh or new in the way of a “speech.” My brother Tom “gave” week in and week out the Downfall of Poland from “Campbell’s Pleasures of Hope.” He gave it with glib rapidity, with much whirling of arms and mispronunciation of words; he invariably asserted that the “toscin” had sounded, and declared in a fine burst of indig-

nation that "Freedom wept when Kockeyesco fell."

Ronald declaimed as much as he could remember of "In arms the Os'trin p-p-phalanx stood." Hart, who was the best among us in oratory, as in lessons, recited "Bernardo del Carpio" in a way that thrilled us afresh as often as we heard it. My own "piece" was "What is that, Mother?" And my haste to show off and shine before Ronald in this "piece" was my undoing.

The Pincher-bug this time was the first link in the chain of my misfortune.

Does anybody now-a-days know the Pincher-bug? My Sybil laughs incredulously and my Charley looks superior when I propound this question. Does any one in these times ever hear tell of a Pincher-bug? We used to quake at the mere thought of the reputed wickedness of this now apparently extinct monster. We also grew pale and huddled together for mutual protection at sight of a hairy worm known to us as the Earwig, persuaded that the minute this vicious creature spied you he

would bore his way, whether or no, into your ear and kill you dead.

The Pincher-bug, a large black beetle, had really, before my time, invaded our premises. One of him, booming around a lighted lamp at night, had by accident or fell design fastened his feelers in the fleshy part of baby Hart's nose, and there clung grimly until pulled off by main force, leaving blood and panic behind him.

It had long been in my mind to construct, after the description current in the family, an artificial pincher-bug wherewith to offer payment to the boys for a life-like wooden snake which I had discovered coiled within the sheets of my bed. On a particular Friday at play-time, instead of entering the races according to custom, I retired into a favorite nook behind the kitchen chimney, and there with Mandy's help and the assistance of sundry bits of wire and cork, pieces of black broadcloth, scissors, thread and needle, I produced a nondescript beast, hideous enough to at least typify the traditional Pincher-bug.

I had just succeeded — again with Mandy's help — in suspending this creation by a string from the tester of my brother Tom's bed, so arranging the string that from behind the headboard the monster could be lowered at will upon the pillow, when my black-mammy's voice sounded in the hall below, "Whar is you, honey? Come heah dis minit. Ef you don't, you ain' gwine ter git on yo' clean clo's befo' dat speech-bell ring."

I descended, breathless, by way of the balustrade. We were understood to present a semifestal appearance at Friday speech-time, donning at least our second-best in honor of that occasion; the boys put on their shoes and brushed their hair.

I writhed and squirmed under black-mammy's hands. The process, always slow, seemed interminable. In my mind's eye, I saw Ronald look up as he always did when my turn came, give me an encouraging glance out of his honest blue eyes, then cock his red head on one side to listen.

I could stand it no longer; I wrenched away.

“Why ’nt you stan’ still, chile ! Huccome you so vi’grous ? Wait, honey, wait ! Dem petticoat buttons ain’t fair fasten’.” But I was already racing up the schoolroom stair.

Sarah Bulger in a spick and span new spring gingham, — conceited thing ! — was on the platform when I entered, droning out “The Minstrel Boy.” I rejoiced secretly when she left out half of the second verse and had to go back and say it over.

Ronald came next. As usual he spluttered and floundered along for a line or two of the Os’trin p-p-phalanx, then stopped abruptly and gazed into space until Doctor Erasmus Whitthorne came down upon him in ponderous sarcasm, “Well, sir, proceed. But not so rapidly, if you please, sir.” Then came Ronald’s blushing retirement, and the Doctor’s promise of a sound caning, sir, at the end of the exercises, sir.

I think that never in my life have I felt more magnificently vainglorious than I did at the moment I myself mounted the dais once sacred to the negro fiddlers. I saw Ronald’s



blue eyes smile approval. I knew that some hours earlier he had confided to Hart — the Blue China Jug had been the price paid to Hart, of this information, — that I was a mighty pretty girl, and not a bit squeaky. I swelled with a sense of my own importance. I smoothed down my (second-best) gingham, turned my eyes upward to an imaginary sky, pointed solemnly with the forefinger of my right hand, and demanded loudly, “What-is-that-mother? —”

I dropped my hand to my waist and paused, feeling all at once blind and giddy.

Doctor Erasmus Whitthorne, dozing in his chair (he always dozed after Ronald), opened surprised eyes. “Go on, Mary,” he said encouragingly, “‘A lark, my child.’”

Thus holpen, I pointed upward again, and again demanded, “What — is — that — mother — a — lark — my — chi —”

I stopped once more, terrified almost into spasms, clutching my short starched skirts with frenzied hands. Then, with a sort of shuddering sob — I can hear it yet quivering



in space!—I loosed my hold and resigned myself to my fate. I stood stiff and rigidly silent while those treacherous petticoat buttons let go their last grasp; and that little white be-frilled garment slipped, slipped, slipped, slowly at first, and then with an appalling swiftness, below my knees, past my pantaleted calves, over my ankles, and finally lay, a billowy snow-white ring, around my feet.

Oh, the shame and mortification of it! Jaconetta's very soul seemed frozen. She stood amid the ghastly silence, her small face pinched and pallid, her lips growing blue, her eyes staring glassily before her. Suddenly a piteous wail burst from her, and a blur of tears drowned the room and all within it. But not before she had seen Ronald turn away his head—his neck and cheek scarlet—and then jump up and flee into the hall and down the stairs. The girls broke into a titter behind their desk-lids; the boys shouted. Doctor Erasmus Whitthorne, stopping the noise with a majestic frown, arose, after what seemed an eternity, and lifted Jaconetta

gently from the platform to the floor, and detained her with a firm hand, while he picked up that awful petticoat and laid it over her arm.

I now believe — nay, I know — that Ronald's averted head and precipitate flight came from a generous desire to spare Jaconetta's feelings. But to Jaconetta, at the time, it seemed a base and cruel desertion. "Mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted" — not the words, but the wounded cry was in her heart. She rushed weeping into her own little room, barred the door, and hid herself behind her bed. After a time her brothers came and pounded vociferously upon the door; later Ronald knocked timidly, and called to her in a strange muffled voice to come out and tell him good-by. She did not answer. She literally could not. Poor Jaconetta!

Only when her mother's step sounded softly without, she ran to the door, unfastened it, and threw herself, in an agony of suffering, in those tender outstretched arms.

I never saw Lord Ronald Macdonald again. I cried myself to sleep on my mother's breast. The next morning I awoke to learn that his guardian had come the night before to discuss The Situation with my father; and had gone to fetch his ward to stay with another uncle, because he himself had joined the Confederate States army.

For by this time even the youngsters in Doctor Erasmus Whitthorne's schoolroom had heard a shrill bugle-blast. It had gone echoing from one end of the country to another, and men were gathering at its call. There was a strange mingling of exultation and sadness, foreboding and hope in the shrill bugle-blast.

Presently the bugle-blast was followed by a drum-tap; the drum-tap by a shot — and the war had begun, — the great Civil War, which was to lay low the master of Good Cheer, and break the heart of its mistress; try the souls of its two oldest sons, and shatter the roof-tree of Good Cheer itself.

Tom and Hart stepped from our school-

room into the ranks. Ronald at the end of the first day's march fell in beside them, and all three tramped off gayly behind their colonel, my father, to the front.

Ronald was one of the earliest victims of that terrible struggle. He fell at Manassas Junction, the blood from a gaping wound in his neck spurting into my brother Tom's face, as he lifted his beloved comrade in his arms. He lies in an unmarked trench on that hard-fought field, along with many of his fellow-heroes. Peace to them, and peace to thee, Lord Ronald Macdonald, thou dearest and best of all Jaco<sup>n</sup>etta's loves!



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